



The Wanderers Club, Illovo, Johannesburg
7 November 2016 – 8 pm

Important South African and International Art

Evening Sale
Lots 201–293

OPPOSITE
Lot 242 Alexis Preller, *David* (detail)



201

Pieter Willem Frederick WENNING

SOUTH AFRICAN 1873–1921

Protea Road

signed

oil on canvas

20 by 29,5 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte
Hardebeck.

Purchased by the late owners from
Pieter Wenning Gallery, 1958.



202

Pieter Hugo NAUDÉ

SOUTH AFRICAN 1868–1941

Springtime, Namaqualand

signed

oil on board

24 by 34 cm

R200 000 – 300 000



203

Maud Frances Eyston SUMNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Namib Landscape

signed

oil on canvas

32 by 54 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



204

Jacob Hendrik PIERNEEF

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

Extensive Landscape in Pink, Orange and Rose

signed

oil on card

36 by 52 cm

R250 000 – 350 000



205

Bertha Amy EVERARD

SOUTH AFRICAN 1873–1965

Delville Wood

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, title and medium on an Everard Read gallery label adhered to the reverse

oil on board

25 by 33,5 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

LITERATURE

Alan Crump. (2006) *The Everard Group: Then & Now*, Johannesburg: Everard Read. Illustrated in colour on the cover.

In the July and August of 1916, the 1st South African Infantry Brigade, making its debut on the Western Front, suffered huge losses at Delville Wood. The South African National Memorial there, designed by Sir Herbert Baker, and adorned by Alfred Turner's symbolic bronze sculpture of Castor and Pollux, was completed a decade later in October 1926. Only months prior, in that March, Bertha Everard had visited the site with her sister Edith King and daughter Ruth, and felt utter bewilderment and horror at the still devastated scene and lingering evidence of battle. Although based in the nearby village of Longueval, Bertha returned day after day to paint the landscape, and possibly produced ten pictures that focused on the mindlessness of war made so clear by the wounded earth in front of her, the charred, split or mangled trees, the water-filled craters and the deep, empty trenches.

It is easy to sense the artist's own anguish in the way paint is smeared across the surface of the present lot, whether by brush or palette knife. Deep greens, browns and purples clash violently, while the 'tree ghosts', as Frieda Harmsen has described them in *The Women of Bonnefoi: The Story of the Everard Group*, 'stand sentinel as far as the eye can see'.¹

Bertha's series of Delville Wood pictures, while painted a decade after the events, firmly belong to the great tradition of British World War One paintings by, among others, Paul Nash, Christopher R.W. Nevinson, Muirhead Bone, William Roberts and William Orpen. The links to Nash are particularly evident in the present lot, and while Bertha's style was perhaps more fiercely Fauvist than the Englishman's, the same eerily still, poignant mood that settles over Delville Wood settles also over Nash's *Sunrise, Inverness Copse* (1917), *We Are Making a New World* (1918), and *The Menin Road* (1919).

Two of Bertha's larger paintings of Delville Wood hang in South Africa House, London, and in the Pretoria Art Museum.

¹ Frieda Harmsen. (1980) *The Women of Bonnefoi: The Story of the Everard Group*, Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik. Pages 124 and 125.



206

Alfred Neville LEWIS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1895–1972

Portrait of Blanche Behrmann

signed

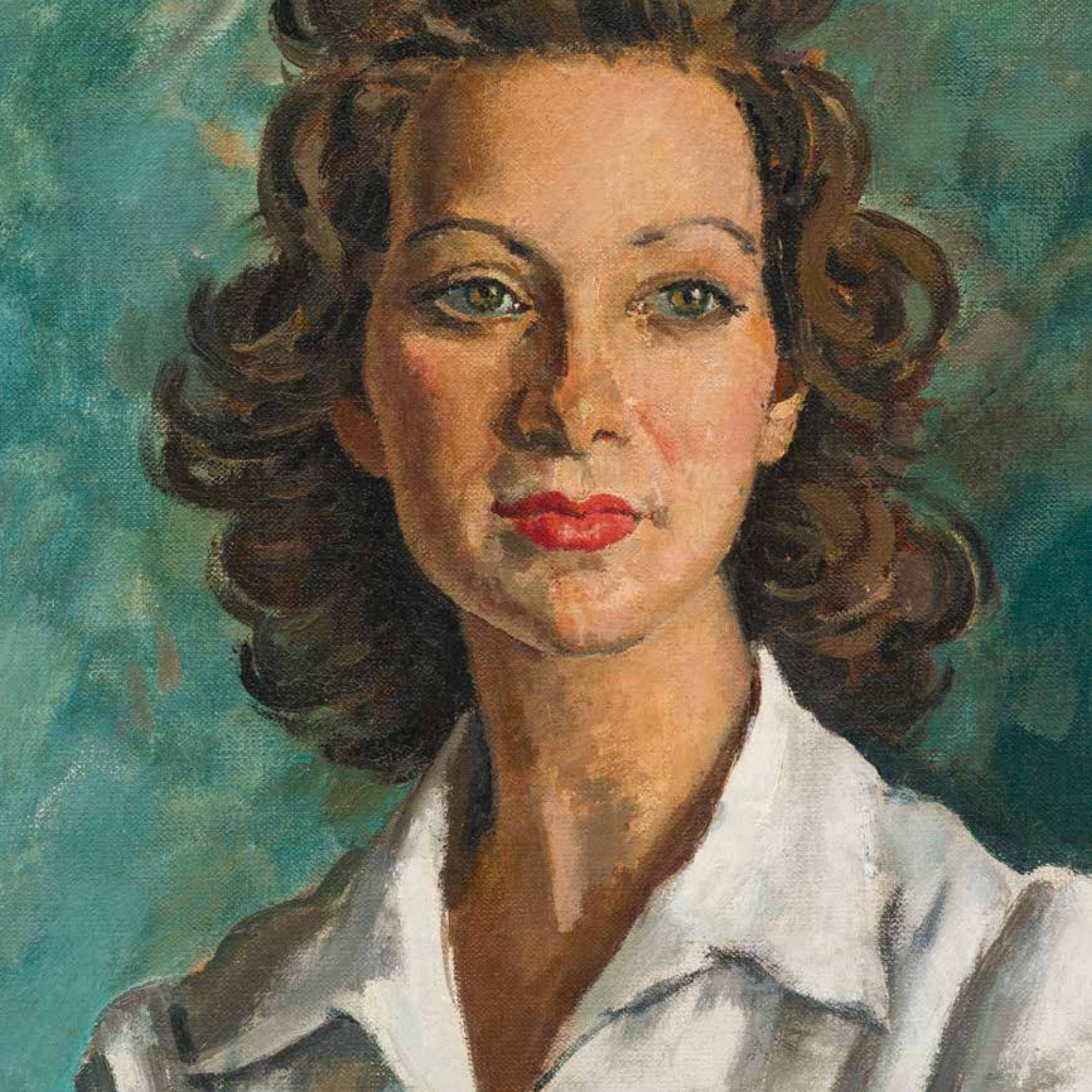
oil on canvas

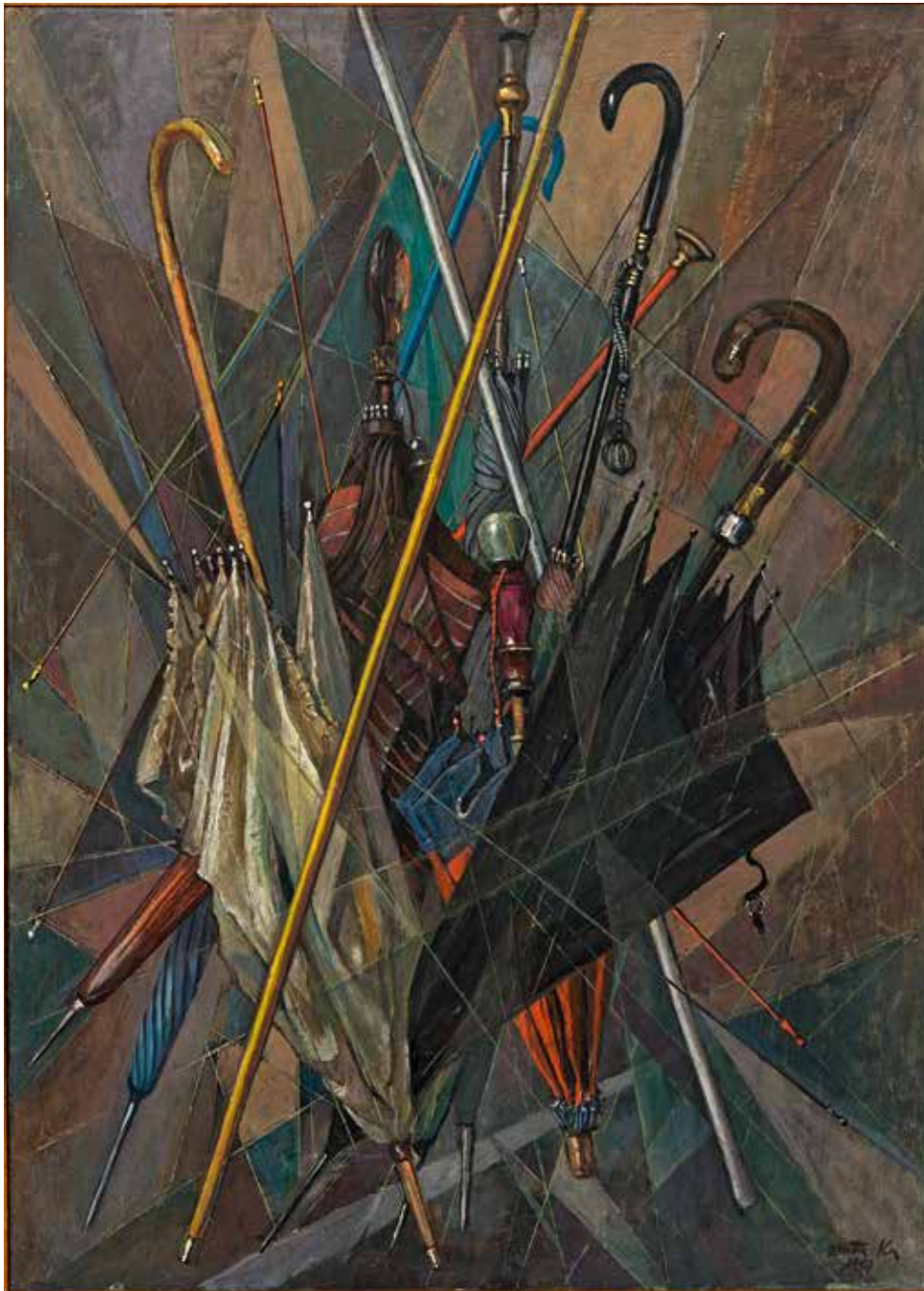
58 by 45,5 cm

R70 000 – 100 000

Blanche Behrmann was the wife of Cecil G. Behrmann, the prominent mid-century art collector, art patron, and property developer (among other prime sites, Behrmann was responsible for Hyde Park Corner in 1969). He would have commissioned this portrait of his then thirty-one year old wife directly from the artist.







207

Dorothy Moss KAY

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1964

Variations on a Theme

signed and dated 1959; inscribed with the title and artist's name on a South African National Gallery label adhered to the reverse
oil on board
85 by 61 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

EXHIBITED

South African National Gallery, Cape Town, *Dorothy Kay*, June 1982, catalogue number 67
Eastern Province Society of Arts and Crafts, 42nd Exhibition, 13–24 October 1959

LITERATURE

Marjorie Reynolds (ed.) (1991) *The Elvery Family; A Memory: Dorothy Kay*, Cape Town: The Carrefour Press. Illustrated in colour on page 182.

Marjorie Reynolds (1989) *Everything You Do is a Portrait of Yourself: Dorothy Kay, A Biography*, Rosebank: Alec Marjorie Reynolds. Pages 359, 361–365 and 378. Illustrated in colour on page 361.

Dorothy Kay married and settled in South Africa in 1910, and is perhaps best known for her closely-observed figure and portrait pictures painted in an academic mode. Bearing in mind her significant *oeuvre* of private, society and mayoral portraits (many of the latter sadly lost in the Port Elizabeth City Hall fire of 1977), as well as her traditional, early-century training at the Metropolitan School of Art and the Royal Hibernian Academy School in Dublin, the regular comparison between her rigorous style and the more expressive approach of her contemporary, Irma Stern, comes as little surprise. Kay's deliberate and studious hand was certainly well-suited to formal portraiture, while her attention to detail led to numerous industrial commissions that more often than not relied on the accurate depiction of medical, mining and military equipment. But in the final two decades of her career, Kay produced a remarkable group of eccentric portraits and absurdist still-lives to which the present lot belongs. *Variations on a Theme*, painted in 1959, shortly after her iconic *Deck Chairs in the Wind*, and in the same year as the very witty *Three Mirrors*, was chosen for exhibition by the Eastern Province Society of Arts and Crafts in 1959. The work had been inspired by the sight of a group of family umbrellas hanging from a recently acquired stand:

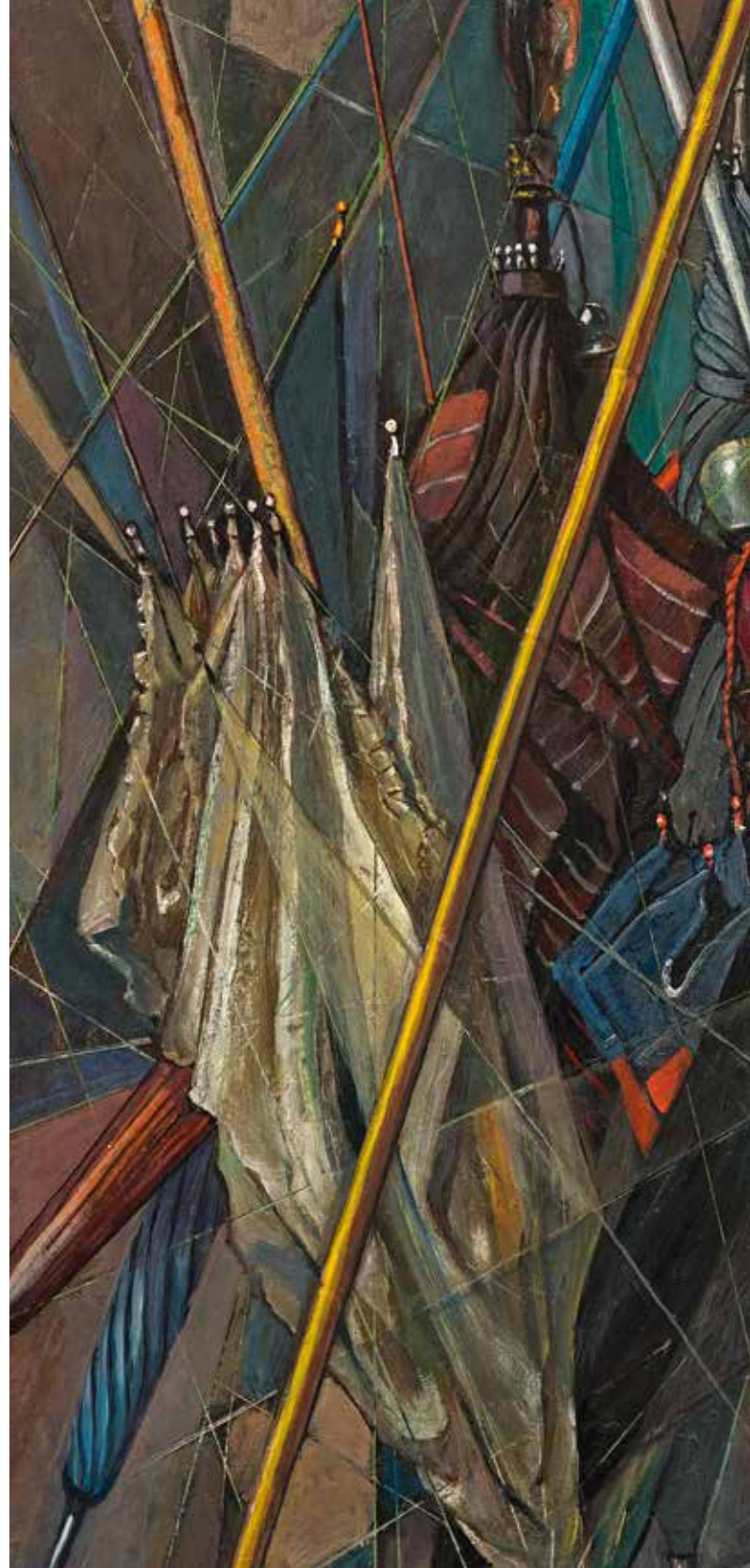
'look what I've found ... Variations on a theme would be the best way of explaining it – a group of umbrellas & the theme is really a straight line – which comes in to it too – lots of them & six umbrellas - ... My old Aunt Annie parasol (wedding present) Jeffrey's black broly – 2 of Joan's, very elegant! & 1 I bought from C.T. – I mended it – & an old beach broly of mine – & a stick!'

The composition of *Variations on a Theme* is wonderfully complex. What appears at first glance to be a group of casually stacked brollies is rather a sophisticated arrangement of angular and overlapping planes, spindly and crisscrossing lines, and strong, bisecting bands of colour. On close inspection, whatever depth the artist suggested in the flapping and pleated fabric canopies is consistently undermined by the interlocking shards of flat colour, not to mention the scored lines cut into the veneer of the board. Moreover, lines and painted edges beginning out of frame end as wire rib tips or ferrules, while others simply disappear altogether into the painted surface. These lines, together with the inflexible steel shafts, crook handles in cane, delicate steel ribs, the clean folds of waxed fabric, and the other more recognisable umbrella components, make certain that the picture is held firmly together by a grid that is elaborate and subtle, but always pleasingly decorative.

The artist was thrilled with the painting: 'the umbrellas is a delightful picture to look at & add to: on & on, always something else to do ... more colour – more line, more imagination – such Heaven!'²

¹ Marjorie Reynolds. (1989) *Everything You Do is a Portrait of Yourself: Dorothy Kay, A Biography*, Rosebank: Alec Marjorie Reynolds. Page 361.

² *Ibid.* Page 362.





208

Maud Frances Eyston SUMNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Steam Train in the Karoo

signed; inscribed with the title, medium and date
on a label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvas

48,5 by 148 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

LITERATURE

Elza Miles (ed.) (2005) *A Journey Beyond the Immediate*. Graham's Fine Art Gallery. Illustrated in colour, unpaginated.

Frieda Harmsen. (1992) *Maud Sumner: Painter and Poet*. Pretoria: JL van Schaik Publishers. Illustrated in black and white on page 122.

Evidence of a major shift in Maud Sumner's subject matter appears in the 1950s. Up to that point she had almost exclusively focussed on interiors and still-lives. A devout Catholic, Sumner's spiritual concerns developed alongside her art, and she increasingly found peace in the silence of the Namibian desert and the vast, outstretched planes of the Karoo. Yet in the present lot the stillness of the desert is spectacularly disturbed by a steam train powering through the landscape. Frieda Harmsen, writing about the painting, noted the Karoo's 'warm pastel colours, its endless vistas, and its peaked and flat-topped koppies. It is an accurate rendering of what anybody can in fact see. And yet it betrays Sumner's yearnings and preoccupations. A man-made machine is propelled by an unseen driver through what appears to be an uninhabited wasteland. With a great deal of noise humanity wants to travel through this space, and leave behind its promise of quietude which is implicit in the small dam with its attendant trees. Sumner has very decidedly opposed the contrasts of hurry and time, the restless and the peaceful, the materialistic and the idyllic. Not only does she formulate this statement with the depiction of man-made objects (the train, rails and cattle grid) intruding on God's creation which is here epitomised by land, trees, water and sky, but she emphasises her point with tone and colour. The right quarter of the painting where we see the train is darker, the colours stronger and the forms more crisply defined than in the rest of the picture. As a result the train 'reads' as a noisy intruder. The curve of the rails, however, sweeps out of the format, and drags the train along with it. In this painting the train is crossing space, but because it cannot part from itself, it cannot enter the silence it traverses. Mysticism and a hankering for silence (which to a large extent is explicit in *Steam Train in the Karoo*) was to be Sumner's impetus for the rest of her career.¹

¹ Frieda Harmsen. (1992) *Maud Sumner: Painter and Poet*. Pretoria: JL van Schaik publishers. Pages 121 and 122.



209

Jacob Hendrik PIERNEEF

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

Landscape with Clouds

signed

oil on board

29,5 by 39,5 cm

R180 000 – 240 000

210

Gregoire Johannes BOONZAIER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

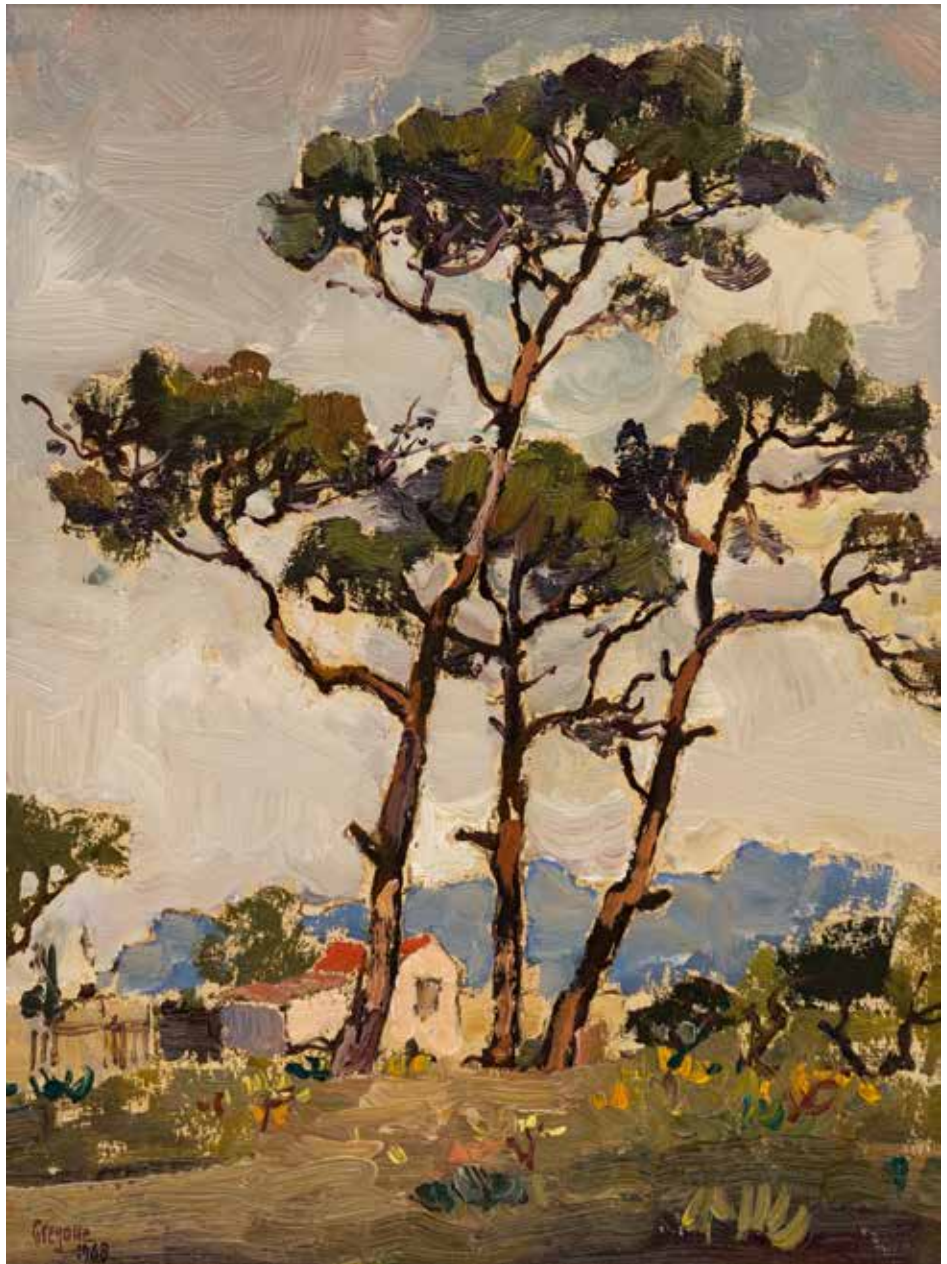
Trees and Cottages

signed and dated 1968

oil on board

40,5 by 30 cm

R140 000 – 160 000





211

Maurice Charles Louis VAN ESSCHE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*Brakdak Homes in the Knersvlakte District
near Nieuwoudtville*

signed

oil on canvas

53,5 by 64 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

212

Alfred Friedrich Franz KRENZ

SOUTH AFRICAN 1899–1980

*Basotholand View with Figures
and Ponies*

signed and dated 1955
oil on canvas
39,5 by 49,5 cm

R40 000 – 60 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte
Hardebeck.
Purchased by the late owners from The
Lidchi Art Gallery, 1955.

213

Alfred Friedrich Franz KRENZ

SOUTH AFRICAN 1899–1980

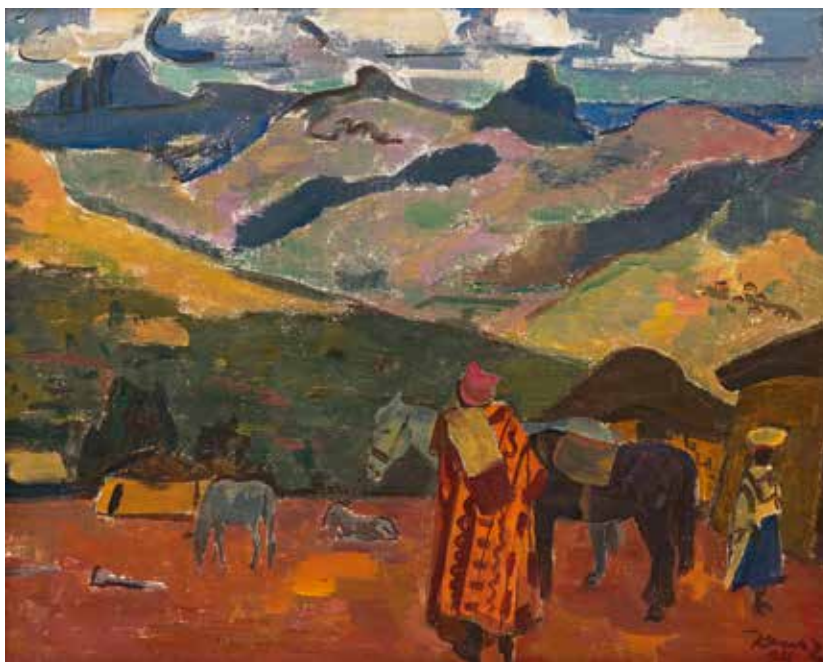
Basotho Rider

signed and dated 1955
oil on canvas
39,5 by 49,5 cm

R40 000 – 60 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte
Hardebeck.
Purchased by the late owners from The
Lidchi Art Gallery, 1955.



212



213



214

Leonora EVERARD-HADEN

SOUTH AFRICAN 1937–

Winter Burn: Giant's Castle

signed; signed and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

75,5 by 101,5 cm

R60 000 – 90 000



215

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Breying The Riems

signed and dated '35

oil on canvas

61 by 46 cm

R900 000 – 1 200 000

PROVENANCE

Purchased directly from the artist and thence by descent.

LITERATURE

Esme Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*. Saxonwold, Johannesburg. Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in colour on page 29.

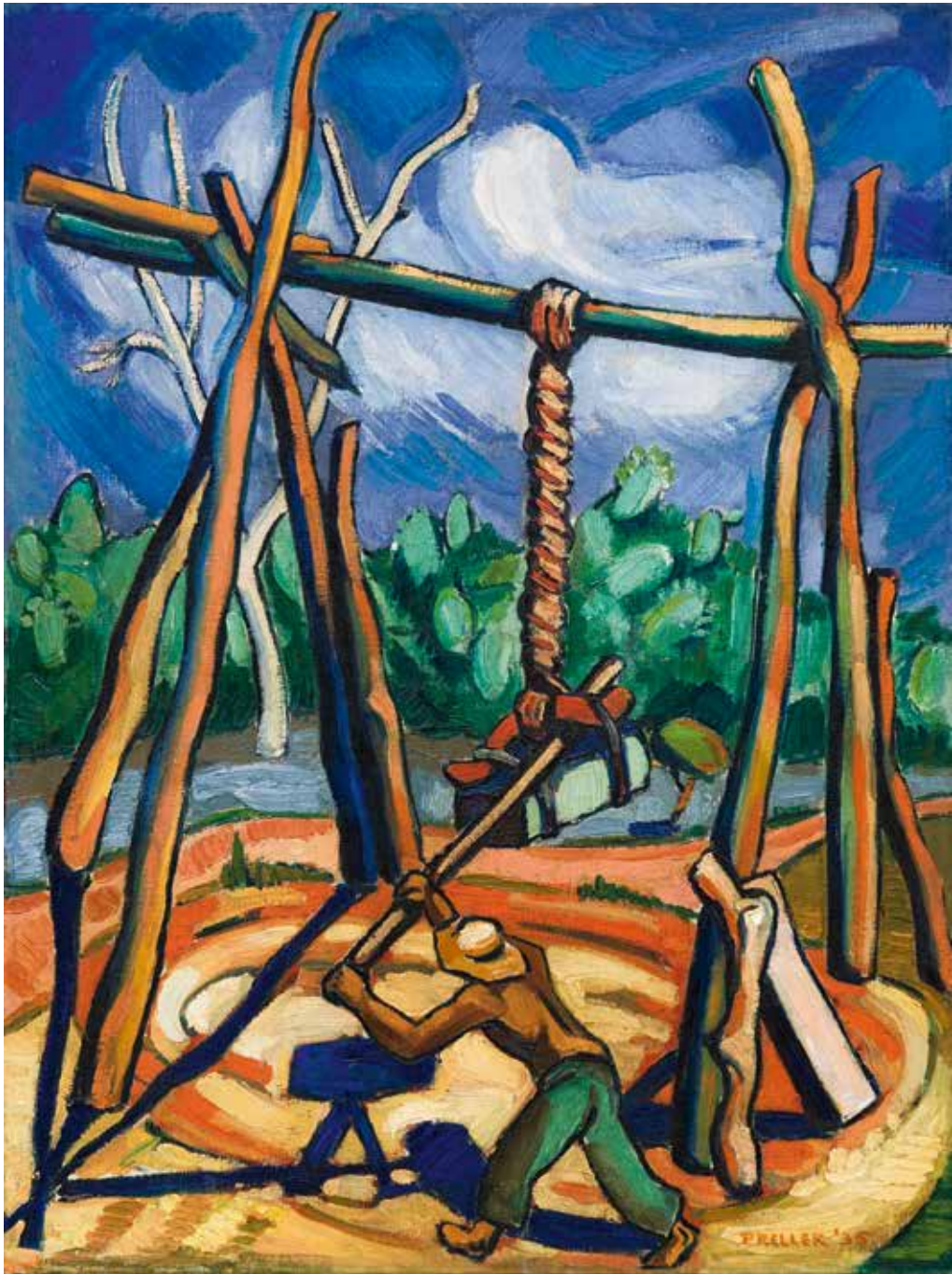
Alexis Preller returned from London in 1935 and showed new work the following year, initially in Johannesburg at Leon Levson's photographic studio, followed by an expanded version of the exhibition in December in Pretoria at Glen's Music Salon. These exhibitions included his iconic *Man in the Sun* of 1936 and this work entitled *Breying the Riems*. Two versions of this painting are known, this one from 1935 and the other, a copy, from 1936. Both are characterised by the broad, definitive brushmarks, a stylized approach, and the intense colour that reveals Preller's indebtedness to Van Gogh.

The rural, 'peasant-like' figure, with straw hat, engaged in manual labour, iconographically links the works to Van Gogh's paintings made in the South of France forty-seven years earlier in 1888. Yet Preller's subject matter of *Breying the Riems* is particularly South African. The hat and the striding figure echo Van Gogh's images of himself as an itinerant painter walking through the sundrenched landscape. The dramatic light in Preller's work casts intense blue shadows on the vivid orange-yellow circular tread path, a powerful contrast to the complementary and intense, gusty blue sky beyond the emerald green band of cacti.

Preller's scaffolded, formal composition is based on the rudimentary structure built to enable the twisting and softening of lengths of leather to make the bindings or *riempies* used in the stringing of seats of local furniture, as well as more generally for the securing of wooden structures. The composition has strong resonances of Van Gogh's distinctive structural and vivid colourful renditions of the drawbridge in his famous series of works of the Langlois-Bridge-at-Arles, 1888.

Pierneef, who had been encouraging to Preller on his initial undertaking to study in London, and was later helpful in the organization of the Pretoria exhibition in 1936, is known to have acquired two of the young Preller's works on the exhibition.

Karel Nel



216

Gerard DE LEEUW

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–1985

Palm Sunday

signed and dated 78

bronze with a brown patina

height: 54 cm, excluding base

R200 000 – 300 000



217

Douglas Owen PORTWAY

SOUTH AFRICAN 1922–1993

The Lovers

signed and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

74,5 by 59,5 cm

R70 000 – 100 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

Portway is perhaps better known for his large abstract canvases of translucent colour fields; his figural works are rare. The present lot, with its solid, fleshy figures, immediately calls to mind Picasso's neo-classical phases, as well as other European, post-War examples by, amongst others, André Derain, Georges Braque and Henri Matisse, each of which reflected the prevailing interest in *Le rappel à l'ordre* (a return to order).





218

Jacob Hendrik PIERNEEF

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

Village with Mountains Beyond

signed

oil on board

21,5 by 30 cm

R180 000 – 240 000



219

Maud Frances Eyston SUMNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Abstract Landscape

signed

oil on canvas

59,5 by 119 cm

R120 000 – 160 000



220

Maurice Charles Louis VAN ESSCHE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

Still Life with Grapes and Jug

signed

oil on board

49 by 59,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000



221

Maud Frances Eyston SUMNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Tabletop Still Life

signed

oil on canvas laid down on board

36,5 by 44 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

Tabletop Still Life bears testimony to Maud Sumner's close affiliation to Paris as the epicenter of European culture in the early part of the twentieth century. She began her art career as a student of the L'École de Paris, and throughout her life returned to live and work in the city that nurtured her artistic sensibilities. She returned to Paris after the war in 1947 and was immediately drawn to the new artistic trends, 'the new preoccupation with abstract art and the importance of colour.'¹

The work of Henri Matisse was now certainly absorbed and adapted in to her painting. We see a distinctive simplification of form, the use of bold colours and a move towards a more abstract vision.² The blocks of colour arranged on the surface, moreover, some very thinly applied, are reminiscent of Matisse's early Fauvist still lifes in which he deliberately left the texture of the unpainted canvas showing through.³

¹ Frieda Harmsen. (1992) *Maud Sumner: Painter and Poet*, Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik. Page 76.

² *Ibid.* Pages 76 and 77.

³ Federico Freschi. (2016) *Henri Matisse: Rhythm and Meaning*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Page 42.



222

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Tower of Babel II

signed and dated '75
oil and sand on canvas
50,5 by 40,5 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.
Purchased by the late owners from Goodman Gallery, 1975.

LITERATURE

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. A similar example is illustrated in colour on page 240.

Tower of Babel II is one of the last paintings to be produced for Alexis Preller's 1975 exhibition at Goodman Gallery. There is a second version of this work, very similar, which is reproduced in Esmé Berman and Karel Nel's two volume publication *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images* (2009).¹ Unlike the example illustrated in the book, however, Preller omits the floating dark form on the left of the 'tower' in the present lot. The spiralling, shell-like form in both these works alludes to the archaic symbol of the Tower of Babel, the metaphor of human aspiration and ability to go beyond boundaries, and of the ensuing chaos.

In *Tower of Babel II* the architectonic shell structure floats in a recessive aquamarine field typical of Preller's hues. This magnificent colour is played off against the radiant white of the shell, and the red sub-structure with its iconic spikes hovering above a dark horizon or coastline.

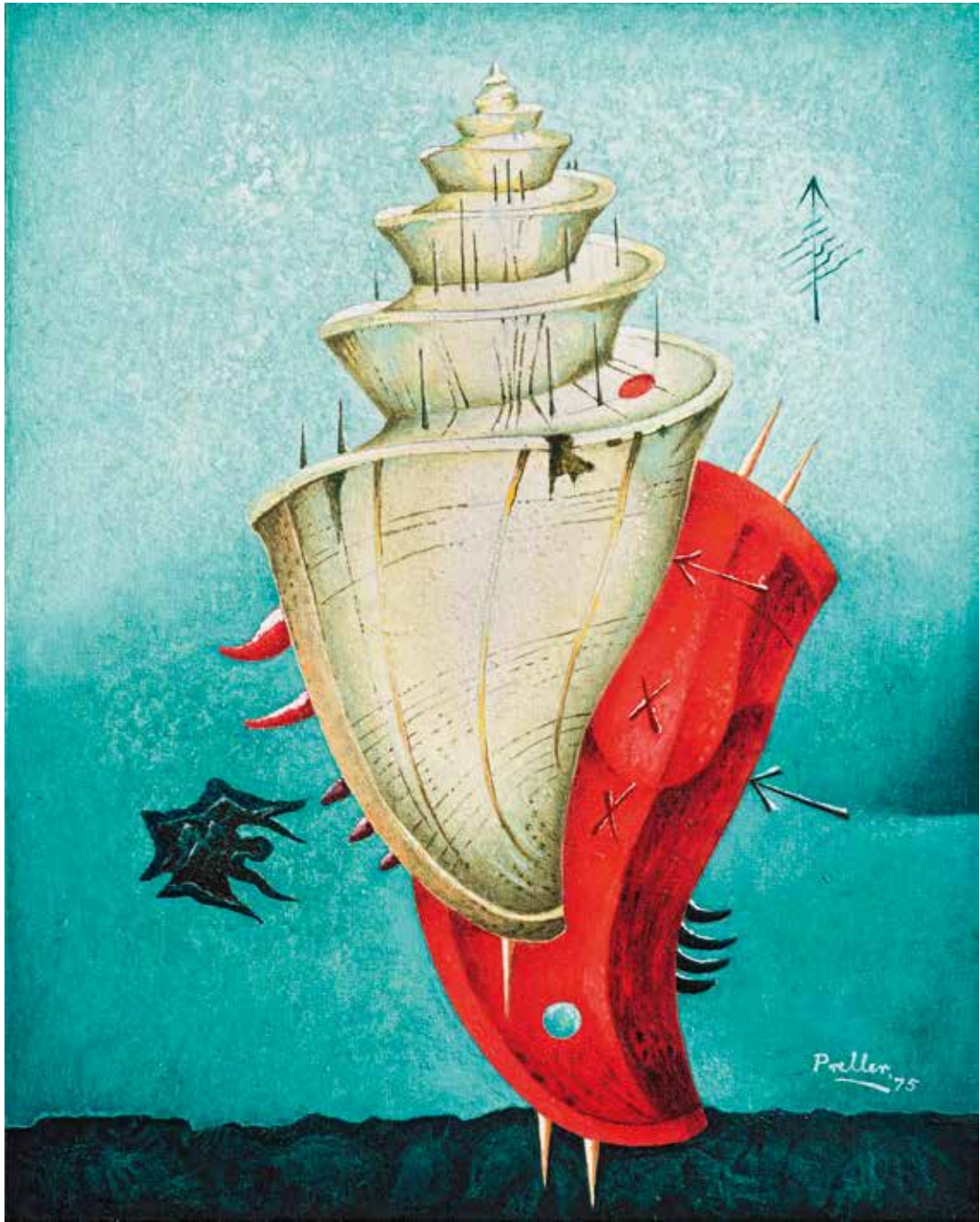
This late work is a highly stylized version of the tower and differs substantially to Preller's earlier interpretation of this theme in the very large oil on gesso, titled *The Tower*, in the Pretoria Art Museum collection.² In this work he creates a shimmering, layered structure with prismatic colour that dissipates into the turquoise and aquamarine background.³

¹ Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Page 240.

² Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Page 320.

³ Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Page 241.

Karel Nel



223

Irma STERN

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

Watussi Chief's Wife (with Head Dress)

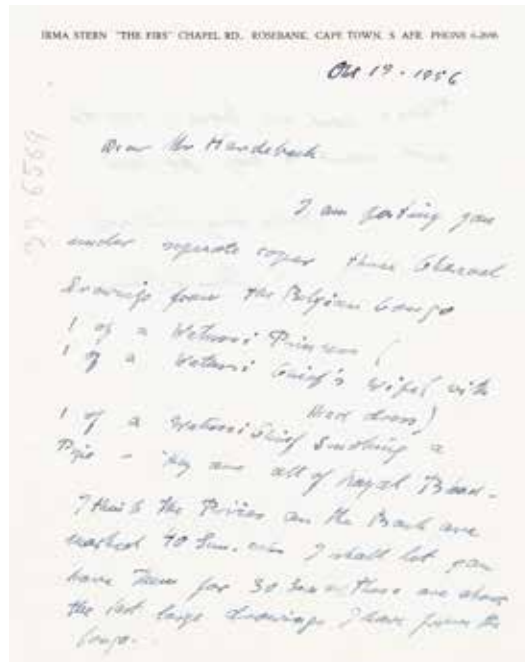
signed and dated 1946; signed, dated 46 and inscribed with the title and the artist's address on the reverse charcoal
61 by 46 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

A very charming correspondence between Walter Hardebeck and Irma Stern is kept in the Hardebeck estate archives. Some of these letters, two of which are illustrated here, refer to the group of three charcoal drawings of Watussi figures that the artist offered Mr Hardebeck, and which had been inspired by her visit to the Belgian Congo in 1942. Mr Hardebeck was quick to choose the present lot, *Watussi Chief's Wife (with Head Dress)*, and returned the others by passenger train. 'Thank you again for your beautiful pieces of art', Mr Hardebeck ended his letter, 'which will always increase the glamour in our home and remind us of your grand personality'.





224

Maud Frances Eyston
SUMNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Still Life with Fruit

signed

oil on canvas laid down on board

59,5 by 40,5 cm

R120 000 – 160 000



225

Maurice Charles Louis
VAN ESSCHE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

Still Life with White Jug

signed and dated 64

oil on canvas

54,5 by 39,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

Collection of Lippy Lipschitz .





226

Irma STERN

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

Woman with Blue Headscarf

signed and dated 1956

oil on canvas

62 by 49,5 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

Purchased by the late owners from Gainsborough Galleries, 1956.

EXHIBITED

Gainsborough Galleries, Johannesburg, *Irma Stern*, 25 September 1956 – 8 October 1956.

Irma Stern's South African modernism combined elements of German Expressionism and Fauvism. Her portraits often played on the intrigue and exoticism of her sitters, but the artist never compromised on likeness or individual personality. The symbolic headscarf worn in the present lot might hint at the sitter's religion or background, but her unruffled, intimate gaze is as particular as it is unforgettable.



227

**Eleanor Frances
ESMONDE-WHITE**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1914–2007

Volcanic Landscape

signed and dated '53; inscribed with the
artist's name, title and medium on a
Graham's Fine Art Gallery label adhered
to the reverse

oil on canvas

60 by 51 cm

R 70 000 – 100 000





228

Cecily SASH

SOUTH AFRICAN 1924–

Swazi Birds

signed and dated '59

oil on board

55 by 121 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

LITERATURE

Frieda Harmsen and Victor Thorne.

(1999) *Cecily Sash: Working Years*,

Presteigne: Studio Sash. Page 51.

The present lot was inspired by a roadside curio of a simply carved black bird with a red beak. Such was Sash's imagination that the little rustic souvenir was transformed instantly into a single, regal bird, and then into a jostling, inquisitive flock. Frieda Harmsen, recalling the anecdote, noted that 'the model for Swazi Bird was a crude primitive Swazi carving. Even in the early compositions a sense of primitive design was apparent, but this is probably the first time that a bird is painted directly from an indigenous prototype. Like the carving, the painting is decorative. The painter has used the black pattern burned into the wood, but has intensified it by making the outlines more austere and alternating the black with white. The background to the bird is the familiar, sensitive ochre-grey, now displaying assurance and full competence of handling.'

Frieda Harmsen and Victor Thorne. (1999) *Cecily Sash: Working Years*, Presteigne: Studio Sash. Page 51.



229

**Erik (Frederik Bester Howard)
LAUBSCHER**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

Still Life with Pumpkin Slice

signed and dated 65; signed, dated and
inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas
58,5 by 70 cm

R300 000 – 400 000

LITERATURE

Hans Franssen. (2009) *Erik Laubscher, A Life in Art*,
Stellenbosch: SMAC Art Gallery. Illustrated in
colour on page 120.



230

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Gathering

signed

oil on canvas

40 by 75 cm

R300 000 – 500 000



231

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Homage to Cavafy

signed and inscribed with the title

oil on canvas

50 by 60,5 cm

R 250 000 – 350 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mr Chris (Tos) Du Toit.

EXHIBITED

Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg,
Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist, 20 October –
3 December 2005

LITERATURE

Karin Skawran. (ed.) (2005) *Walter Battiss: The Gentle Anarchist*, Johannesburg: The Standard Bank Gallery. Illustrated in colour on page 45.

Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933) was a Greek poet, journalist and civil servant. His consciously individual style earned him a place among the most important figures not only in Greek poetry, but in Western literature too. His poems were typically concise but intimate evocations of real or literary figures from Greek culture, while his thematic focus was more often than not concerned with the future, sensual pleasures, the moral character and psychology of individuals, homosexuality, and nostalgia. Battiss was certainly moved by Cavafy's poetry, and the homage he paid the Greek in the current lot, defined by a fragmentary composition, stolen glimpses, naked flesh and vignettes of cool pattern, might hint at the artist's personal interpretation of Cavafy's *oeuvre*.



232

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Ritual Bull

signed; printed with the title on a label adhered to the reverse
oil on canvas laid down on board

7,5 by 9 cm

R80 000 – 120 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.
Purchased by the late owners from Sotheby's South Africa, 1986.

Alexis Preller is known to have produced a number of very small-scale works through the earlier part of his career. These were often very specifically framed in the late 1940s, either by himself or with the help of the young Zakkie Eloff. In this example, the white Ndebele-beaded surround and scalloped grey frame were crafted by Eloff to enhance the work. These small, jewel-like paintings talk to his ability to make striking works no matter what their scale. *Ritual Bull* relates to a lineage of works focusing on the iconic status of the bull within the southern African region where these horned creatures, with their very distinctive hump, elicit great respect. These ceremonial and monumental animals are associated with the ancestral world among many groups living along the eastern seaboard of Africa, and the white Nguni cattle in particular are associated with royal clans within KwaZulu-Natal. Preller's *The Small White Bull* of 1953 in the Sasol collection refers specifically to this reverence.

The importance and scale of the piebald animal in *Ritual Bull* is amplified by the low horizon, and the yellow radiance that glows behind it suggests a symbolic significance. The bull looks at us with a wide-eyed and strangely bemused expression, possibly as a result of all the activity on his back. A delightful syncopated line-up of white egrets with their bright red beaks pointing in various directions, are perched along his rump, back, his pronounced hump, his forehead and on one horn.

Preller is well known for the repeated exploration of both subject matter and images that are used and reused in variations, and Esmé Berman has described how he carefully tended and burnished these over a lifetime. An identical bull is found in another small exquisite work entitled *Herd Boy* from 1949, in which the same animal is depicted with the same stance, same markings, same gestalt of birds placed on the back of the bull, but with eyes more slanted and inscrutable. Sleeping below the bull in this lonely and extended landscape is a herd boy, well built, stocky, with a white loin cloth, brass armband, bracelet and anklet. With his bearded, broad face he sleeps oblivious of his surroundings, of the bull, and of the egrets that curiously look at him or tend him. It is somewhat startling to see here, as early as 1949, the emergence of the strong physiological prototype and likeness which emerges much later to inform Preller's distinctive, almost life-size intaglio, *Adam* (Lot 239) in 1969.

Karel Nel





233

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Archaic Sandals

signed and dated '48

oil on canvas laid down on board

25,5 by 35,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

Purchased by the late owners from Sotheby Parke-Bernet South Africa, 1979.

Preller completed a series of evocative paintings of a pair of sandals. He uses them successively as still life objects in relation to beautifully decorated cloths, mangoes and other talisman-like objects collected during his extended period on Mahé in the Seychelles between October 1948 and February 1949. During this time he travelled between the beautiful Indian Ocean islands, and lived and painted near the beach at Beau Vallon.

Many artists have painted their shoes as a form of self-portrait or as a social comment on their daily lives, as in the case of Van Gogh, whose work Preller greatly admired. The heavy, closed, workmanlike shoes that Van Gogh painted alluded to the oppressive conditions of farmers in the fields of the Boriage where he ministered to the poor. Preller's exquisitely crafted Indian or Arabic style sandals, however, which were worn on the beaches of the east African islands, allude in some way to his distancing himself from the constraints of the conservative and oppressive environment from which he came. Preller's sandals evoke a sense of carefreeness, direct evidence of Preller's change of mindset in the new context. The sandals in all these still lifes, depicted in golden hues, are handcrafted with woven checkerboard detailing and red decorative embellishments, and stitched with geometric precision around their perimeters. All these distinctive features are also clearly evident in the Johannesburg Art Gallery version, and in the Standard Bank collection painting entitled *Sandals*, where they seem to float like boats on the decorative east African cloths.

In this work, *Archaic Sandals* (1948), the same pair of sandals is fastidiously painted on to a fine cotton-duck stretched over board. What is particularly unusual in this painting is the intrusion of the human presence. An almost biblical foot wearing a sandal strides into the right hand side of the picture with a pharaonic-like authority. The foot has stepped off a woven palm mat onto an aquamarine surface that suggests fine sand compacted by a thin film of sea water. Traces of cord or seaweed are caught below the foot.

In the true spirit of Preller, in this series of unusual still lifes, he is able to evoke a sense of the idyllic, the poetic, and conjure majestic qualities, all from a modest pair of local East African sandals.

Karel Nel





234

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Space Angel

signed and dated '71
oil and gesso on canvas
111 by 121 cm

R4 000 000 – 6 000 000

Preller's image of a disembodied head in aquiline profile, with full lips and a large Egyptian-like eye, became the prototype for an extended, seminal series of works to which *Space Angel* firmly belongs. The left-facing profile, animated by the sleekest, almond eye and stylized teardrops, merges spectacularly with a fragment of turquoise and sunglow skull. A deep, empty eyesocket balances the composition, and the head is edged by a pharaonic beard and golden teeth.

Preller's unique motif appeared initially in a number of related intaglio works such as *Angel of the Lord* (1969) and *Angel King* (1971), while in 1970 the same image was transfigured in *Two Angels*. The latter work, a large, square oil painting of heads floating in space, remains in the Pretoria Art Museum.

Space Angel shows Preller exploring the translation of this archaic or heiratic head into yet another technique; he used high relief gesso built up in a Tachist manner, and then over-painted to simulate an opulent and textured surface. The piece is testament to Preller's lifelong and ongoing process of working and reworking images that were significant to his iconographical vocabulary, with each version systematically attempting to release a new and nuanced reading of his original, iconic, and prototypical image.



Two Angels





The Collection of Ruth and Jerome Siegel, New York

Over the course of many years, influential New York art collectors Ruth and Jerome Siegel assembled a remarkable private art collection that filled their residences. The Siegel Collection includes a range of artistic styles and periods, from the likes of Howard Hodgkin and Anish Kapoor to David Hockney and the Pop masterpieces of their friend Robert Indiana. The collection also includes a number of rare and important pieces from South Africa. The American and European pictures will be auctioned at Christie's, New York, but the South African component is to be auctioned locally by Strauss & Co.

Ruth Siegel was an art consultant and founder of the Art Latitude Gallery and the Ruth Siegel Art Gallery in New York. She was also a board member of MoMA PS1, the Museum of Art and Design, and the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies. Jerome 'Jerry' Siegel was a prominent American entrepreneur, and founder of steel and commodities firm Titan Industrial Corporation. Ruth in particular did much to support young artists and developing talent. The couple were also known as generous philanthropists, particularly in the fields of education and medicine.

Lots 235, 236, 237, 238, 239



235

Edoardo Daniele VILLA

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Female Form

signed, dated 1969 and
numbered 1/4

bronze with green patina, on a
wooden base

height: 70 cm, including base

R120 000 – 160 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Ruth and
Jerome Siegel, New York.

236

Edoardo Daniele VILLA

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Relief

signed and dated 1956

bronze

13 by 7,5 cm, excluding base

R15 000 – 20 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Ruth and
Jerome Siegel, New York.

237

Peter HAYDEN

SOUTH AFRICAN 1939–

Elongated Form

bronze with a green patina,

mounted on a wooden base
height: 56 cm, including base

R20 000 – 30 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Ruth and
Jerome Siegel, New York.



236



237

238

Cecil Edwin Frans SKOTNES

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2009

Head

signed; inscribed with the artist's name,
title and dated 1969 in another hand on
the reverse

carved, incised and painted wood panel
91,5 by 75 cm

R140 000 – 160 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Ruth and
Jerome Siegel, New York.

Egon Guenther Gallery, Johannesburg.



239

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Adam

signed and dated 1969
intaglio, oil on fibre glass
183 by 91 cm

R6 500 000 – 9 000 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Ruth and Jerome Siegel, New York.
Purchased from The Lidchi Gallery, Johannesburg

LITERATURE

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Pages 281, 283, 297 and 308, and illustrated in black and white on page 281.
Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Pages 229–231 and illustrated in black and white on pages 228 and 231.
Artlook. No. 35, October 1969. Illustrated in black and white on page 23.

Alexis Preller's *Adam*, made in 1969, is a powerful, enigmatic work of immense complexity. It holds a pivotal place in his complex *oeuvre*, engaging the intersection of mythology and the human body.

In 2009, at the time of publishing the comprehensive *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, the whereabouts of this major work was unknown. Nevertheless, because it was seen as so important, the work was reproduced in the books in black and white from the only extant photograph, which had appeared in the October 1969 issue of *Artlook* magazine, just prior to the artist's groundbreaking exhibition of intaglios in the same year at the Lidchi Art Gallery, Johannesburg. Esmé Berman holds this work in such high esteem that she devoted a four-page spread to the analysis of this *Adam*. The work has only recently come to light in New York and has returned to South Africa where it can now be seen for the first time in many years.

This work is an almost life-size rendition of Adam, and is executed in Preller's innovative intaglio method. The image appears at a distance to be in high relief but is in fact produced as a negative, a concave form, cast in fibre glass resin. The cast is then meticulously painted to create the illusion of a convex rendering of the form. In the finished work, the eye is constantly challenged by an ambivalent reading of surface and image, making the work even more enigmatic and ungraspable.

The male nude appears prominently throughout Preller's career, from the heroic, early *David* (Lot 242) to the iconic Kouros figures of 1969, where the male torso is highly stylized and celebrated. In contrast, works such as *African Sebastian* of 1949, and here, in this *Adam* of 1969, the human figure is used as an embodiment of pain and suffering, often historically associated in Preller's work with external conflicts in belief and ideology, yet also personally alluding to his own internal struggles.

The powerful vertical stance of the body of Adam seems to float on the cerulean blue, shield-like background. The floating line of sparsely placed studs, aligned to Adam's navel, and two sharp vertical arcs in red, punctuate this recessive ovoid.

The pathos of the figure is concentrated in the downcast head, closed

eyes, and inner focus. The chin rests on the well-defined chest bracketed by the purity of the shoulders. The absence of arms is curious, prompting the question as to whether the artist edited them for aesthetic purposes or if they are in fact folded behind the body. Whichever, this leads to an elongation and elevated reading of the floating figure. The elegant torso, with its longitudinal decorative striations, is in contrast to the relative stockiness of the lower body with its stylized kneecaps and decorative anklets.

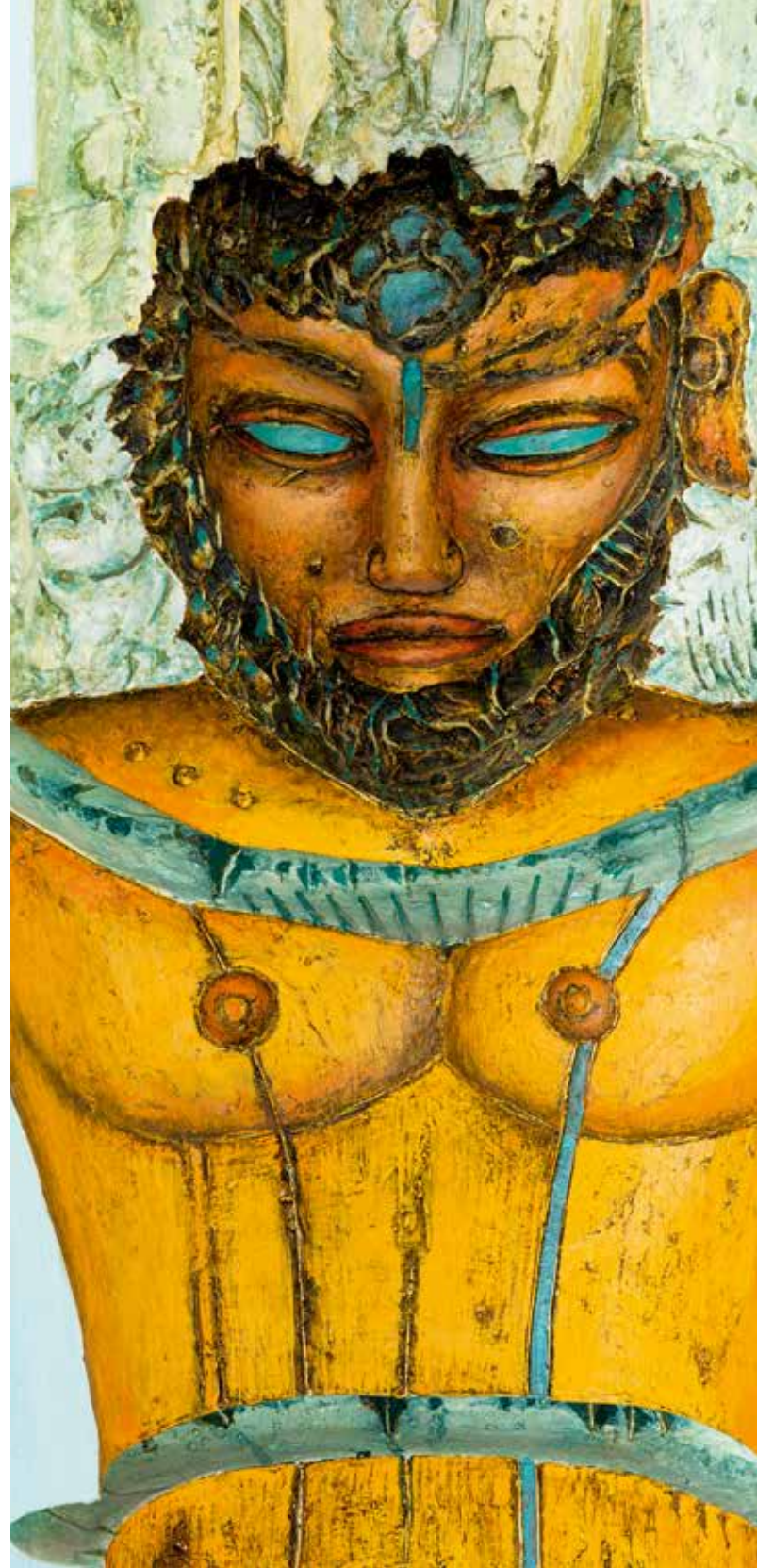
Adam's masculinity is much more pronounced here than in Preller's more abstracted Kouros figures. Adam here is symbolically an embodiment of the creation of the first man. The distinctive facial features, with almond shaped eyes, rough beard and angular face, though, have strong references to ancient images of pagan Greek satyrs, the Bacchanalian qualities also alluding to the power of the natural, the sexual, the virile.

In contrast to the notion either of the virile or the sense of bodily pain, Preller focuses on the potential spiritual and transcendental qualities within Adam. Preller's works are characteristically multilayered in his cross-cultural quotations of sacred art. He extends a large radiant crown-like structure above Adam's downcast head and defines a pronounced circle on Adam's forehead, making reference to the bindi or third eye of expanded consciousness, often seen in early Hindu renditions of Krishna and images of the Buddha.

The power and ambiguity of this piece lies in its complex connections to many biblical and mythological figures in Preller's work throughout his life: be it hieratic Egyptian pharaohs, Adam, the stylized Luba and Dogon ancestor figures, David, the great Greek marble Kouri, and the Christ.

In the end, the uncanny experience of viewing these intaglio pieces from a distance creates an anomaly: they seem to project a physical presence, but when the viewer approaches to view them at close quarters, they collapse in on themselves reversing the image into a negative space. This strange and innovative technique is particularly associated with Preller's intensively explorative career as an artist.

Karel Nel





240

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Moon Suite, three

all signed and dated '71
collage and oil on board
11,5 by 12 cm; 11,5 by 14 cm; 11,5 by 13,5 cm;
artist's frames: 47,5 by 44,5 cm (3)

R150 000 – 200 000

EXHIBITED

Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, 24 October to 26 November 1972, catalogue number 182

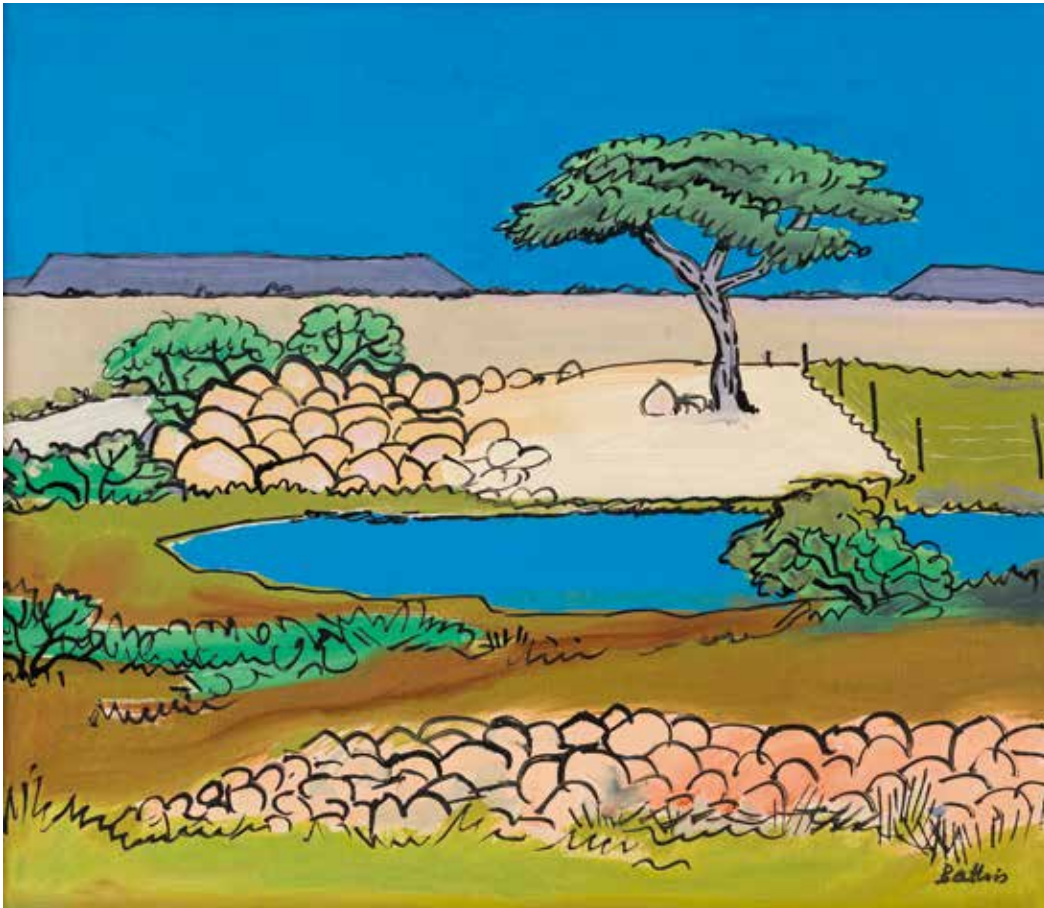
Exhibited on the exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum, and illustrated in the catalogue (no pagination).

LITERATURE

A.J. Werth. (1972) *Alexis Preller Retrospective*. Illustrated in black and white, unpaginated.

Although Alexis Preller painted *Moon Suite* quite late in his life, the three miniature paintings, respectively titled *Rendezvous*, *In orbit*, and *Blast-off*, constitute the synthesis of an important strand in his artistic sensibility: the non-figurative, abstract expressionist side of his work. They reflect Preller's interest in space travel in the late 1960s in the wake of the Apollo landing on the moon. *Moon Suite* evokes the surrealist imagery in Preller's work on his return to South Africa in 1943, having spent time as a prisoner of war in Italy and in North Africa, while the abstract shapes are redolent of the austere landscapes of well-known French surrealist painter Yves Tanguy. In addition, *Moon Suite* can be related to Preller's strong reaction to the precision and decorative requirements of the mural he was commissioned to paint for the Transvaal Provincial Administration Building in Pretoria in 1958. Preller subsequently resorted to an abstract expressionist style, which Esmé Berman calls a form of 'abstract symbolism' or 'an informal taché-ism'.¹

¹ Esmé Berman. (1983) *Art & Artists of South Africa*, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema. Page 350.



241

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Karoo Waterhole

signed

oil on canvas

38,5 by 44,5 cm

R80 000 – 120 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mr Chris (Tos) Du Toit.

242

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

David

signed and dated '52

oil on panel

25,5 by 30,5 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

Purchased by the late owners from Henri Lidchi Art Gallery, 1967.

This painting appears in a number of remarkable photographs, taken by the photographer Richard Cutler, of Alexis Preller in his Toscadi studio in Pretoria in 1949, shortly after the artist's return from the Seychelles. When Esmé Berman and I were working on the double volume, *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows* and *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, we were unable to find or trace this painting in the exhibition listings of the time. We therefore deduced that the work left his studio between exhibitions and was therefore unrecorded. It is a much-delayed but special experience to be able to view this work at close quarters now.

Preller's themes are often complex, mythological, symbolical and biblical. Figures such as Adam, St. Sebastian and Christ appear as protagonists in his work. They appear as mythological themes rather than religious Christian motifs, but are used as tropes of deep psychological experiences empathized with, by both himself, and his potential viewers.

By deduction I surmise that this young lithe man, with his beautifully rendered hand in its poignant gesture of being raised to his chest, is the youthful biblical David: the striking torso, a taut loincloth around his hips, stands facing us with a sling held in his lowered hand. His self-composed stance ambiguously reads either as courageous readiness or incredulous disbelief of his miraculous defiance and defeat of the giant, Goliath. A majestic, dark viridian green mountain looms behind him as he stands with poise in a valley. A thin arced line at the mountain base alludes to a river, where he stands alone on the amber-coloured alluvial plane.

The characteristic presence of egrets, typical of this period in Preller's work, create a spatial ambiguity as the sumptuous, ruffled-feathered bird closest to him looks out beyond, while the small egret seems to clamber awkwardly up the vertical terrain.

Curiously, Preller edits the David, focusing specifically on the body language of the torso rather than the extremities of head and lower legs. His youthful body type is not yet stylized into the Kouroi figures of Preller's later *oeuvre*, but talks to a refined but nevertheless heroic representation. The representation is possibly an unconscious reflection of Preller's own slight, light yet muscular body, which can be seen under the artist's white overall in the Constance Stuart-Larrabee photograph of the young Preller in his studio in the mid-1940s.



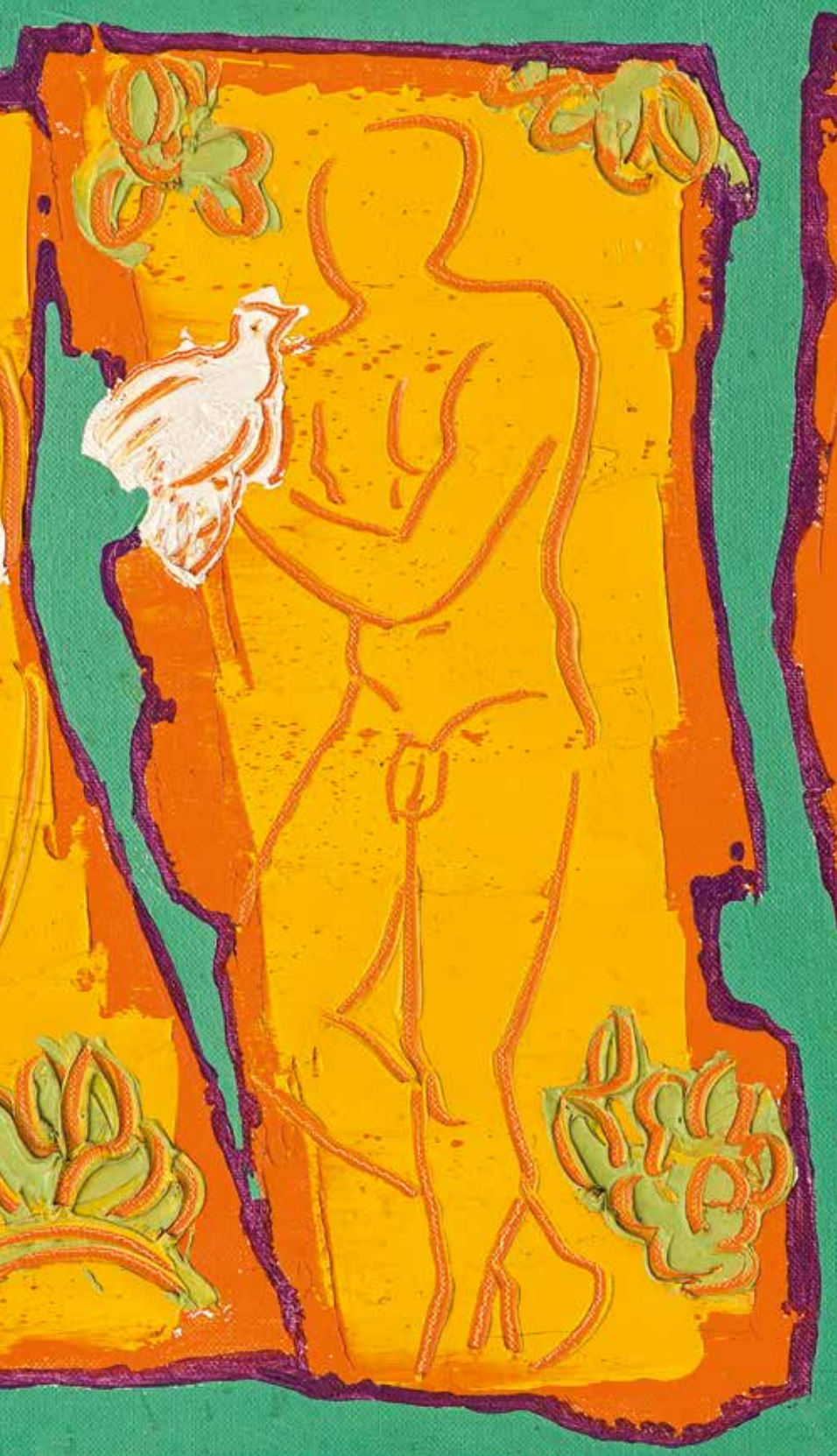
Left: Preller at Ygdrasil. Photograph: Constance Stuart-Larrabee.

Below: Preller in his studio with *David*. Photograph: Richard Cutler.



Karel Nel





243

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Genesis – Adam

signed

oil on canvas

34 by 50 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mr Chris (Tos) Du Toit.

Walter Battiss's *Genesis – Adam* is a splendid celebration of the genesis of man, with three Adam figures given life in a glorious, paradisiacal setting. The artist used the technique of scraffito to score the male form, doves and foliage, from three swathes of orange and yellow-sunrise hues that are framed in magenta.

Battiss built up the painting by layering smooth-surfaced fields of colour before deftly, with a single outline, carving from the paint the three Adam figures. The first figure is tender and genderless, the central Adam figure is muscular, poised, virile and assured of his masculinity, while the third is modestly crouching in the implied landscape with two doves and shrubs.



Bathia

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Rock Art Composition I and II

'To date, no single event has had a more profound influence on the art of Walter Battiss than his encounter with primitive art.'¹

While traces of Battiss's obsession with rock art are easily found throughout his huge and wildly-variant *oeuvre*, these two large works, repatriated from Sydney, Australia, are rare examples of the artist engaging so directly with rock art in a major composition. These works were originally a single panel, and were later split in two under Battiss's supervision (one panel was re-signed too). Despite the division, they remain some of the largest Battiss works to appear on the market for some time.

Battiss was a worldwide authority on rock art, and published seven books on the subject, including *Artists of the Rocks* (1948), a copy of which he gave to Picasso via his art dealer Henri Kahnweiler on his second trip to Europe in 1949. Picasso subsequently invited Battiss to his studio and, according to Murray Schoonraad, was deeply impressed. 'Tell me now Battiss,' said the Spaniard, 'am I as good as your Bushman artists?'

Rock Art Composition I and II illustrates an important point as Battiss negotiated the relationship between rock art and modernism. He tirelessly traversed the country to visit well-known rock art sites in the 1930s and copied and traced the images he found on rocks and cave walls, many of which are now housed in the Origins Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand. He also painted rock art scenes in watercolour on paper but, as Marion Arnold has argued, rock art, for Battiss, was typically more a stimulus to modernism than something he imitated. She noted that 'he was ready to assimilate alternatives to verisimilitude'.³ Karin Skawran similarly noted that the influence of rock art on Battiss's style is usually seen as a 'highly personal'⁴ interpretation, or as Andries Walter Oliphant puts it, they were 'individualised re-workings of rock art' in which he synthesised 'technologies and aesthetic ideas of modern European art ranging from Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism and various forms of abstraction on the one hand, and the complex visual grammar of rock art on the

other'.⁵

These two works represent neither this modernist approach nor the mimetic scenes of rock art originals. Rather, he has made the leap to the rock-art-inspired flattening of the picture plane so that it is difficult to distinguish which figures represent rock paintings and which might be the artists making them. While remaining more faithful than usual to rock art depictions, this spatial ambiguity represents a 'multi-level reality' that dissolves the distinction between the phenomenal and the spiritual realm and presents 'a more conceptual interpretation of reality'.⁶

'Battiss,' Oliphant concluded in his contribution to *The Gentle Anarchist*, 'would not have become the artist he did without the magisterial repository of Southern African rock art which he worked to preserve and promote. His work is not a homage to the past but a signal of the passages South African art in the twentieth century had to negotiate. In this, he opened a path leading from the repressive past to the present and perhaps to the future of creative freedom beyond prejudice and prescription'.⁷

Rock Art Composition I and II are likely just such a homage, showing Battiss poised between the rock art that provided his inspiration and the radical modernism for which he is so widely recognised.

1 Murray Schoonraad. (1976) *Walter Battiss*. Cape Town: C. Struik Publishers. Page 11.

2 *Ibid.*, page 16.

3 Marion Arnold. (1989) 'The Spirit of the Picture: Thoughts on the Paintings of Battiss' in *Battiss and the Spirit of Place*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. Page 40–41.

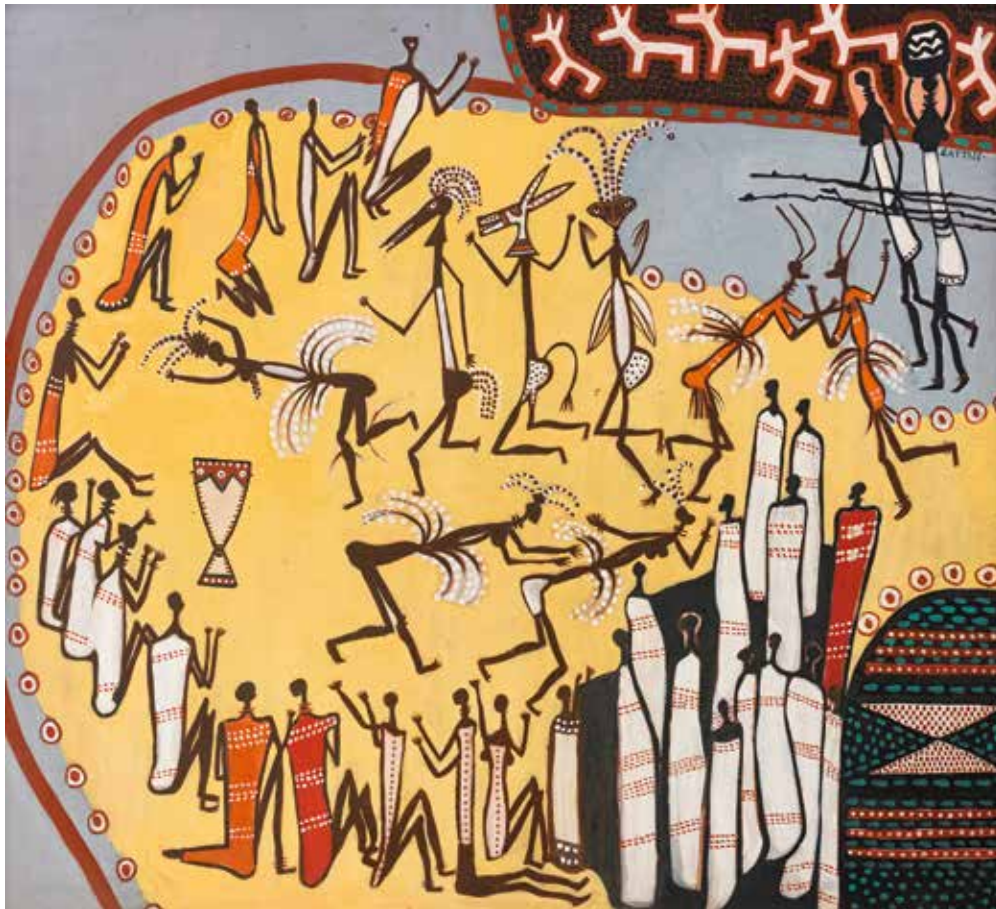
4 Karin Skawran (ed). (1989) *Battiss and the Spirit of Place*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. Page 4.

5 Andries Walter Oliphant. (2005) 'Modernity and Aspects of African in the art of Walter Battiss' in *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist* Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Page 22.

6 Karin Skawran (ed). (1989) *Battiss and the Spirit of Place*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. Pages 16 and 17.

7 Andries Walter Oliphant. (2005) 'Modernity and Aspects of African in the art of Walter Battiss' in *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist* Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Page 23.





244

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Rock Art Composition I

signed

oil on board

116,5 by 138 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 200 000



245

Walter Whall BATTIS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Rock Art Composition II

signed

oil on board

117 by 129 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 200 000

246

Ezrom Kgobokanyo Sebata LEGAE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1938–1999

Sheep

signed and numbered 3/6
bronze with a brown patina
height: 23 cm

R100 000 – 120 000





247

Lucas Thandokwazi SITHOLE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1931–1994

Had Enough!

signed

carved wood

height: 66 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

EXHIBITED

Gallery 21, Johannesburg, 1982.

Republic Festival Arts Exhibition, May-June 1981,
catalogue number 290.

LITERATURE

The Haenggi Foundation. (2015) *Lucas Sithole, 1931–1944:*

Highlights, Basel and Johannesburg: The Haenggi Foundation.

The work is illustrated in colour on the cover and page 95.

Catalogue of the Republic Festival Arts Exhibition, 1981. Page 54.

Lucas Sithole attended the Polly Street Art Centre from 1959 to 1960, where he studied painting and sculpture with Cecil Skotnes. This was the turning point of his career. In his practise he allowed the wood to dictate the form of his sculpture, while his subjects were ever-rooted in African mythology.

Sithole's *Had Enough!*, carved from Nkunsibomvu wood, bears testimony to Marilyn Martin's observation that '(the artist's) method of sensed realism combined with expressive distortions, his concentration on surface manipulation and the play of light and shadow over the figures, emerge and merge with an iconography of the human being, the human condition, and animals.'¹

¹ Marilyn Martin. (1993) *Lucas Sithole: Our Art 4 = Ons Kuns 4*. Pretoria: Pretoria Foundation for Education Science and Technology. Pages 178–185.



248

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Revelation

signed and dated 45

oil on canvas

59,5 by 70 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

LITERATURE

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in black and white on page 87.

Preller was taken prisoner in June 1942 when Tobruk fell to Rommel's forces. After stints in prisoner-of-war camps in Libya and Italy, he returned to Pretoria in August 1943, and was demobilized that October. The North African Campaign had left a telling mark, and despite having witnessed moments of compassion throughout, the inhumanity and violence had still scarred him. No surprise then that images from his service, whether of loneliness, divinity, mutilation, or optimism, pervaded the group of pictures in the years after his homecoming. *Revelation* was painted in 1945, and exhibited in the August and September that year at the Gainsborough Gallery in Johannesburg. It showed the kind of leafy, jungle landscape he had seen in the Belgian Congo in 1939 – painted thickly with viridian, dark olive and midnight blue – but above which a paratrooper, slack-shouldered and lifeless, drifts downward. A fellow soldier lies waiting, likely dead, in a lava-pink clearing, reminiscent of the erupting Nyiragongo volcano the artist had witnessed at Lake Kivu, and which left a life-long impression of both beauty and terror. *Revelation* would be utterly hellish but for the winged angel floating between the two mountain peaks; she suggests the 'paradox of beauty in the midst of horror' that Preller continued to explore in his post-War canvases.¹ In the opinions of Karel Nel and Esmé Berman, the picture always 'had a meditative, almost mystical quality, for which precision of draftsmanship was entirely secondary to overall mood.'²

¹ Esmé Berman and Karel Nel. (2009) *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Page 87.

² *Ibid.*





249

Alexis PRELLER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Woman with Red Hair or Ophelia

signed and dated '44

oil on canvas

45 by 30 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Mrs Liselotte Hardebeck.

An early work of 1944 in Preller's characteristically staccato-like and fluttering paint marks of the period, *Woman with Red Hair or Ophelia*, depicts a striking young woman with a distinctive, elongated profile and full lips. Her forehead is prominently defined by a horizontal headband of twisted cloth that encircles her head, and is fixed by a floral metal hairpin.

Her pink pallor within the dominantly blue work seems to allude to theatrical make-up that suggests that she is enacting a part. Her lithe and nubile body is tinted in a sheath of blue shades, and decorated with a scattering of delicate flowers, buds and a butterfly wings. This ambiguous reading of body surface, skin and embellished flower-like symbols is similar in style to the rendition of the enigmatic figure, lying on a white petal-strewn cloth, in the artist's famous and psychologically-charged painting, *Fleur du Mal*, from the same year.

Besides the rare self-portraits, or images of people in his close circle such as his sister Minnie, Christi Truter, and much later Guna Massyn, Preller seldom did portraits of identifiable figures. But a small work from 1952 entitled *The Profile*, an unusual portrait of Pat Philip that showed the sitter's full lips and auburn hair, seems to link her to the earlier, theatrical rendering of the young woman in the present lot. Further evidence that Pat Philip is indeed the *Woman with Red Hair or Ophelia* can be seen in a contemporary photograph of her next to *The Profile* at the opening of Preller's 1952 exhibition at Gallerie Vincent in Pretoria.

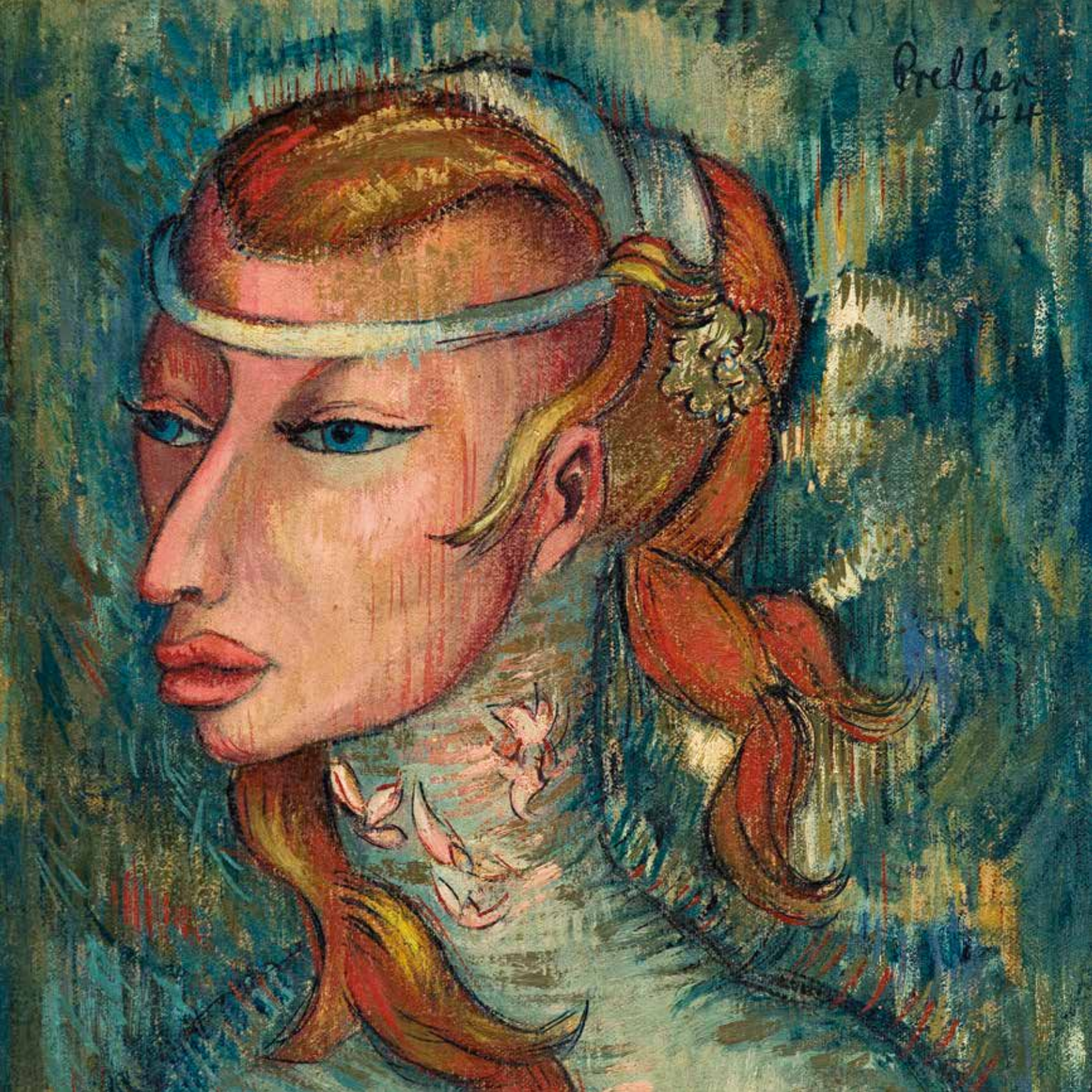
Karel Nel



Pat Philip in front of *The Profile*.



The Profile.



Bollen
44



250

Larry (Laurence Vincent) SCULLY

SOUTH AFRICAN 1922–2002

City Skyline

signed and dated 68

oil on canvas

182,5 by 304 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of the Late Estate Mr Chris (Tos)
Du Toit.

It should come as little surprise that *City Skyline* coincided with Larry Scully's move to Johannesburg. The canvas's shimmering light, its gleaming towers of colour, and its visionary aesthetic evoked the ambitious, energetic and technology-charged spirit of the city in the late 1960s.

'He was plunged into daily contact with the hub-bub of Hillbrow and the frenzied animation of a developing metropolis', noted Esmé Berman in her entry for the artist in her landmark dictionary of *Art & Artists of South Africa*. 'Into the calm breadth of his painted vistas was interjected a pulsating rhythm,' she continued, 'the percussive syncopation of the city. He was fascinated particularly by the ambiguous night image of sparkling lights and shadowed finite forms of building reaching into the infinite darkness of the starlit sky.'

Esmé Berman. (1983) *Art & Artists of South Africa: An illustrated biographical dictionary and historical survey of painters, sculptors and graphic artists since 1875*, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema. Page 391.



251

Cecil Edwin Frans SKOTNES

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2009

Figure Panels, four

all signed

carved, incised and painted wood

two: 151,5 by 90 cm;

two: 151,5 by 120 cm (4)

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

PROVENANCE

Purchased from Michael Stevenson in 2001; at the time Skotnes himself touched up the panels.

This large-scale frieze of ten figures on a series of four abutting wooden panels has a contemporary yet archaic African presence. Cecil Skotnes's distinctive rendering of the human form came from an extended evolution, both from his interest in the process of printmaking and in the appreciation of traditional African art. Early in Skotnes's career as a professional artist, he encountered the art dealer Egon Guenther, a goldsmith and former gallery director in Germany who had immigrated to South Africa. Skotnes was introduced to Guenther towards the end of 1954, and the meeting proved to be a turning point in the artist's career. Through Guenther, Skotnes became more closely acquainted with German Expressionism and the expressive similarities between it and great African art.

Guenther attracted a number of artists to his gallery with a shared sensibility. These included Eduardo Villa, Sydney Kumalo, Pino Cattaneo, Cecily Sash and Skotnes himself. Their interest in a contemporary African aesthetic was formalized into a group that exhibited internationally as the Amadlozi Group, a name meaning 'spirit of our forefathers', originally suggested to Guenther by Kumalo. They had greatly differing artistic styles but were unified in their pursuit for a pronounced, indigenous character to their art, something essentially true to its African context.

It was Guenther who encouraged Skotnes to engrave on hardwood blocks, initially making abstract, bold, black and white prints. The evolution of the scale of these woodblock prints eventually led Guenther and Skotnes to recognise the potential of these incised blocks in their own right. This developed into the inking and colouring of the blocks with dry pigment as stand alone artworks, evolving into large compositions where the distinctive shapes of the figures were coloured with ochres, reds and whites. As in the present lot, the dramatic, coloured figures are set off against a dark background created by whittling a rich complex surface, related to a technique used in traditional southern African carvings.

The groups of iconic figures here stand in this series of panels at times next to each other and at others abutting or nudging each other, but it is the fluid linear tracteries between the heads of the figures that seem to allude to a human connection on another level.

This expansive work, most likely painted around 1975, epitomizes the artist's mastery of his unique medium. The unusual, composite nature of the work enables Skotnes to extend the confines of the single wooden panel more characteristic of his work. This quadtych is uncommon in its scale as it seems more mural-like, more public in its breadth and its collective engagement.

Karel Nel









252

Robert Griffiths HODGINS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

Bye-Bye Darling

signed, dated 1995, inscribed with the title and
'For Little Flo with great affection' on the reverse
oil on canvas

49 by 75 cm

R250 000 – 400 000

Little Flo was the nickname the artist used
for his gallerist Linda Givon.



253

William Joseph KENTRIDGE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

Drawing for Felix in Exile

signed and dated '96
charcoal on paper
56 by 75 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

Felix in Exile, one of Kentridge's most important works, was the fifth of eight films that occupied the artist between 1989 and 1999. Each of these films consisted of 30 to 40 drawings; each engaged editing, dissolving, erasing and overdrawing techniques, not simply as a form of animation but as a conscious part of the artistic process.¹ The deserted landscape, Felix's homeland, was used as the backdrop for the film's credits.

'In the same way that there is a human act of dismembering the past,' Kentridge wrote by way of introduction to *Felix in Exile*, 'there is a natural process in the terrain through erosion, growth, dilapidation that also seeks to blot out events. In South Africa this process has other dimensions. The very term 'new South Africa' has within it the idea of a painting over the old, the natural process of dismembering, the naturalization of things new.'²

¹ William Kentridge: *Felix in Exile*, [Online], Available: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/felix-in-exile/>

² William Kentridge, [Online], Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kentridge

254

Jack HEATH

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–1969

Strange City

signed and dated 1962; signed and inscribed with the title on the reverse
crushed glass and oil on board
121,5 by 244 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

Juliette Leeb-du Toit, writing in a catalogue essay accompanying the Jack Heath retrospective exhibition at the Tatham Gallery in 2009, noted that the artist was part of 'an English modernist diaspora' that arrived in South Africa after World War Two.¹ As might then be expected, the artist's early associations and influences included the 'many contemporary British painters working in or around London, such as Stanley Spencer and Paul Nash.'²

Heath was deeply moved by the embrace of abstraction among his British contemporaries, particularly in the aftermath of the war. 'Artists reacted to war in various ways,' wrote Leeb-du Toit, 'to some it resulted in increased incorporation of metaphysical content, even recourse to sacred themes, as reflected in the work of Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash and others. Jack Heath's abstraction was clearly influenced by his familiarity with the work of Sutherland, Nash and other English contemporary artists.'³ Heath's enthusiasm for abstraction was attended by an abiding interest in spirituality and mysticism, particularly the relationship between art and spirituality, and 'his interest in the universality of Biblically derived themes also stemmed from his awareness of major projects being undertaken by artists such as Graham Sutherland for post-war religious and secular environments.'⁴ One example is the Cathedral Church of Saint Michael in Coventry where, opposite a large tapestry by Sutherland is a stained glass baptistery window by John Piper, who introduced abstraction and the modernist tendency to express spirituality in a religious context through 'pure form and ... truth to materials.'⁵

Heath's later abstract work particularly is characterised by the use of saturated colour and various other methods to achieve a certain visionary intensity and spiritual quality. '(He) made several large works in wax medium on board during the period 1966 to 1969,' wrote his daughter, Jinny Heath, that have 'wonderful glow.'⁶ Another medium he experimented with to achieve a heightened luminosity was crushed glass, as in the present lot, *Strange City*. The abstract composition and geometry of the work is reminiscent of some of Piper's pieces, and the colouring and the inclusion of glass also suggests Heath's interest in the medium. Heath's will to transform painting to pure light in this work evokes a powerful sense of spirituality, but his location of the image in an urban context reflects a secular spirituality, and a preference for expressing spirituality through art, not necessarily through religious institutions.

¹ Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2009) *Jack Heath: Mediating Modernism in KwaZulu-Natal*, Pietermaritzburg: Tatham Art Gallery. 2–5 *Ibid.*

⁶ Jinny Heath. (2015) *Jinny Heath: An Artist Family*, [Online], Available: <http://jinnyheath.tumblr.com/>





255

Jack HEATH

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–1969

Cosmic Events

signed and dated 1959
oil and enamel on board
121 by 244 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

In Heath's work, the influences of '(Graham) Sutherland, (Paul) Nash and other English contemporary artists' meet a 'new cultural and geographic terrain' in South Africa.¹ *Cosmic Events* is an exemplary large work from the last decade of the artist's career, during which he turned almost entirely to abstraction, although in the tradition of British modernism, the roots of representation remain. Leeb-du Toit describes these works as 'powerful and ominous, their strength located in their sublimity in scale, saturated colour and hermetic content.'²

Heath's daughter Jinny, commenting on the present lot, noted that her father's 'fascination with thorn forms started shortly after his arrival in South Africa in 1947'³ Images of thorns recur in Heath's work 'until the year of his early death in 1969, when he produced the powerful painting *Thornveld Fire*'.⁴ In reference to another sketch, Jinny notes the 'multiple possible meanings' of the thorn forms, which might include the Karroo landscape and perhaps even Christ's thorny crown.⁵

Cosmic Events is an example of an identifiably 'modernist-inspired contemporary South Africa idiom' that deals directly with the same crises of faith and representation that occupied many of the artist's British contemporaries.⁶ The painting combines Heath's characteristic visual intensity in its 'expressive interpretation of form, diaphanous layering of saturated colour and tone [and] conceptual form and content'.⁷

¹ Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2009) *Jack Heath: Mediating Modernism in KwaZulu-Natal*, Pietermaritzburg: Tatham Art Gallery.

² *Ibid.*

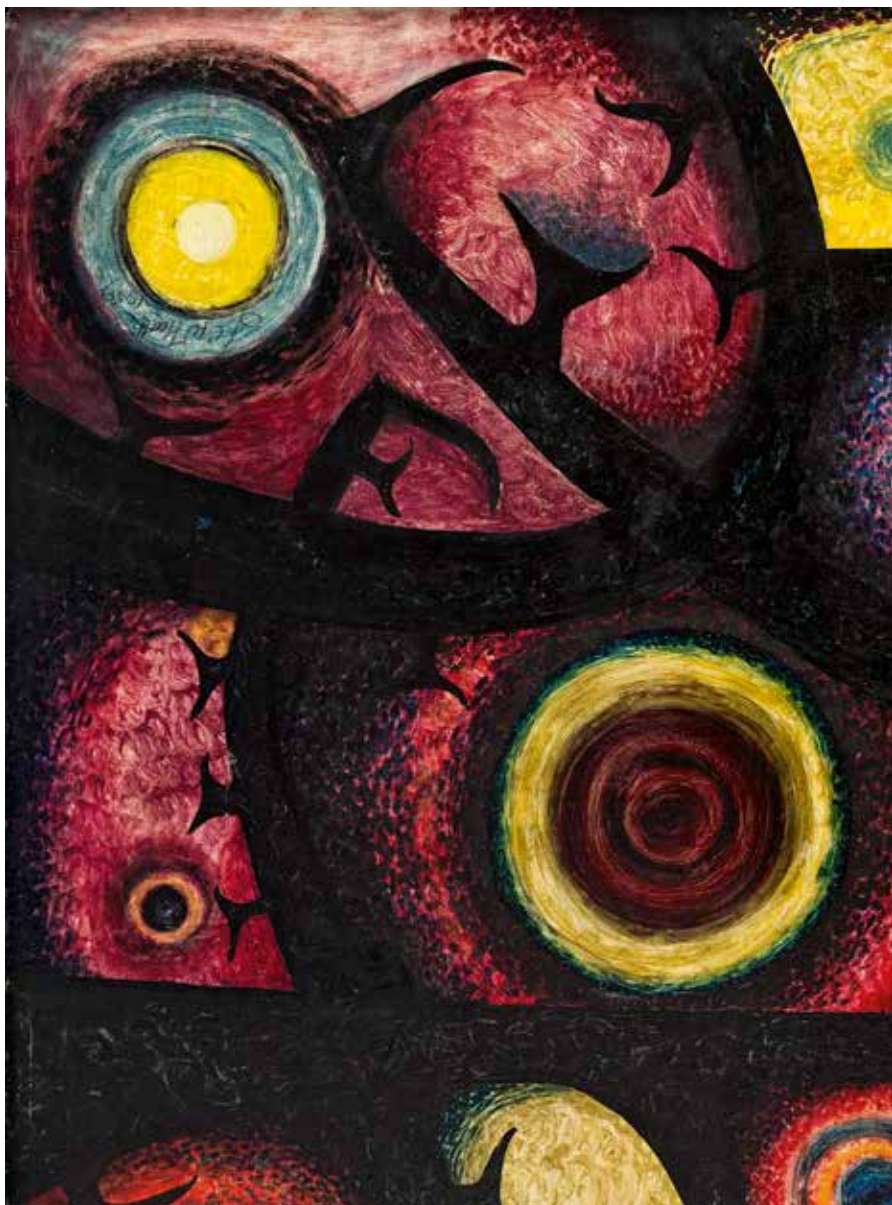
³ Jinny Heath. (2015) *Jinny Heath: An Artist Family*, [Online], Available: <http://jinnyheath.tumblr.com/>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2009) *Jack Heath: Mediating Modernism in KwaZulu-Natal*, Pietermaritzburg: Tatham Art Gallery.

⁷ *Ibid.*







256

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Limpopo

signed

oil on board

45,5 by 61 cm

R900 000 – 1 200 000

For Water Battiss collectors, the original oil rendition of the iconic *Limpopo* holds a special place in the artist's *oeuvre*. It is the basis for one of Battiss's most recognisable, popular and well-collected screenprints of the same title. Battiss painted the iconic work soon after his return from a series of trips to the Limpopo River in the early 1950s. A decade later, in 1965, when he published his book, *Limpopo*, the painting was exhibited at Gallery 101 at the Johannesburg launch of the book, where the present owner acquired it.

Although the oil painting and screenprint are almost the same size, the painting reveals extra, noteworthy details and much more information than the print. Battiss thickly applied paint in certain areas in the oil, while the design is more uniform and simplified in the screenprint. One of the most significant areas of difference is the calligraphic marks in the black areas of the canvas.

Murray Schoonraad recorded that Battiss would assimilate his impressions in sketches after his Limpopo trips. 'The calligraphic forms, which we have come to see as characteristic of his art, had their origin in a visit to the Limpopo Valley where he copied the interesting roots, shadows and shapes he perceived in the dry riverbed and in the arid veld,' he noted.¹ He added that 'these in their turn suggested human and animal figures and even later, an alphabet which he has developed for Fook Island.'² This idea is developed further by Jack Ginsberg in his essay in *Walter Battiss: I Invented Myself*, which accompanied the major exhibition at the Wits Art Museum this year. Thus the hidden information in the oil original of *Limpopo* gains additional significance in the development of Battiss's ideas and in his evolution as an artist.

The work is remarkable in terms of its internal perspectival workings. The right hand side of the painting is a view from above looking down on a fountain, while the left hand side, with its anthropomorphic figures – humans merging into animals – represents a spiritual realm. These perspectives are presumably merged in the consciousness of the elemental figure placed at the centre foreground. The multidimensional reality, synthesising the perspectives of the natural, spiritual and physical realms, are at the heart of Battiss's fusion of rock art and modernism, one of his crowning achievements as an artist.

¹ Murray Schoonraad. (1976) *Walter Battiss*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers. Page 12.

² *Ibid.*





257

Christo COETZEE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2000

Skull

signed and dated 72

oil on canvas

86 by 114 cm

R140 000 – 160 000

Christo Coetzee was schooled in the European modernism of France and Italy, and fell under the sway of the avant-garde of the Far East, especially that of Japan, where he studied with members of the Gutai Art Association in 1959 and 1960. He exhibited with Georges Mathieu and Lucio Fontana in Paris, while his studies in Japan reinforced his interest in abstract expressionism. This style was quite unfamiliar in South Africa at

the time, where the dominant focus was on the so-called search for the 'spirit of Africa' in the work of such artists as Walter Battiss, Alexis Preller and Cecil Skotnes. The arabesque lines that characterise this work led to the label of 'neo-Baroque'. Soon after Coetzee painted this work in 1972, he performed an unthinkable act at the opening of his exhibition in Cape Town in 1975: he slashed similar abstract works such as this one into ribbons. It created an unparalleled sensation in the press at the time. Coetzee, the indefatigable creative artist, then went on to 'repair' these works, and essentially inventing a number of new 'isms' in modern art, including tearism, fragmentism, shatterism as well as repairism. He considered the destruction of his work as a form of 'art as theatre', or an 'intuitive happening'.¹ Seen in this context, Coetzee's *Skull* could be viewed as symbolic of the demise of the old order, and the advent of a new direction in his artistic career.

¹ Christo Coetzee. (1975) PROTESTISM – IS IT ART? Summary of a public lecture at the former SA Association of Arts (Western Cape) in Cape Town on 7 February 1975, first published in *Arts Calendar*, March 1975, and reproduced in Muller Ballot (1999) Christo Coetzee. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau. Pages 85 and 86.



258

Norman Clive CATHERINE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–

Middleman

signed

carved and painted wood

95 by 130 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

PROVENANCE

Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, 2002

Robert Griffiths HODGINS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

Howling at the Edge of Dawn

signed, dated 1997/8 and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

91 by 121,5 cm

R700 000 – 900 000

In *Howling at the Edge of Dawn*, Robert Hodgins, this country's colour-supremo, placed two disembodied heads, both in profile, and both with their tongues lolling out their mouths, yowling at a full, hazy moon. The horizon line, defined with strokes of vaporous blues, and punctuated by an enigmatic marker, splits the canvas in two, while the stone pedestals that support the heads, floating in a midnight-black space and encrusted in thin, dirty reds and faint, emerald greens, suggest a ritualistic or debauched mood. Perhaps the most arresting detail in the painting, however, is the grotesque, crippled form isolated in the bottom right corner that Hodgins lifted directly from the *oeuvre* of Francis Bacon. The reference might immediately bring to mind Bacon's harrowing and canon-defining series of screaming popes based on Velázquez's portrait of *Pope Innocent X*, but the form Hodgins chose is more closely related to the Irish-born artist's bleak, breakthrough triptych of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* that was painted in 1944, and remains a linchpin of the post-War collection at the Tate, London.

Bearing in mind so many of Hodgins's depraved, distorted figures, all painted with restless, vivid marks, it comes as no surprise that Bacon played such a pivotal role in his iconography and style. Evidence of Bacon's influence on the South African is ever-apparent in works such as *Ubu Screams* (1984), *End Game* (1994), the record-breaking *J'accuse* (1995–1996), and *Circus: Strongman* (2006) – all recently sold at Strauss & Co – and it is worth noting how frequently Hodgins mentioned Bacon in conversation and interviews. On one such occasion, while chatting with William Kentridge and Deborah Bell, Hodgins picked out a selection of Bacon's 'black' pictures, mentioned some of his 'nice bluish-pink limbs', and described them all as 'stunning pictures!'

Howling at the Edge of Dawn is not simply Hodgins's homage to a painter he loved. The work might borrow directly from Bacon, but it is painted in the South African colourist's unmistakable spirit. Despite the inclusion of the open, screaming mouth in the corner, with its teeth like claws suggesting the existential agony and human vulnerability on which Bacon played, one cannot help but sense the tongue-in-cheek humour that characterizes the best of Hodgins's paintings.

¹ Brenda Atkinson (ed). (2002) Robert Hodgins, Cape Town: Tafelberg. Page 52.



Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion, 1944, Francis Bacon 1909–1992
© Tate, London 2016





260

Edoardo Daniele VILLA

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Vertical Form

painted steel

height: 287 cm, including base

R300 000 – 400 000





261

Edoardo Daniele VILLA

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Figure

signed and indistinctly dated
painted steel
height: 343 cm, including base

R350 000 – 500 000



262

Christo COETZEE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2000

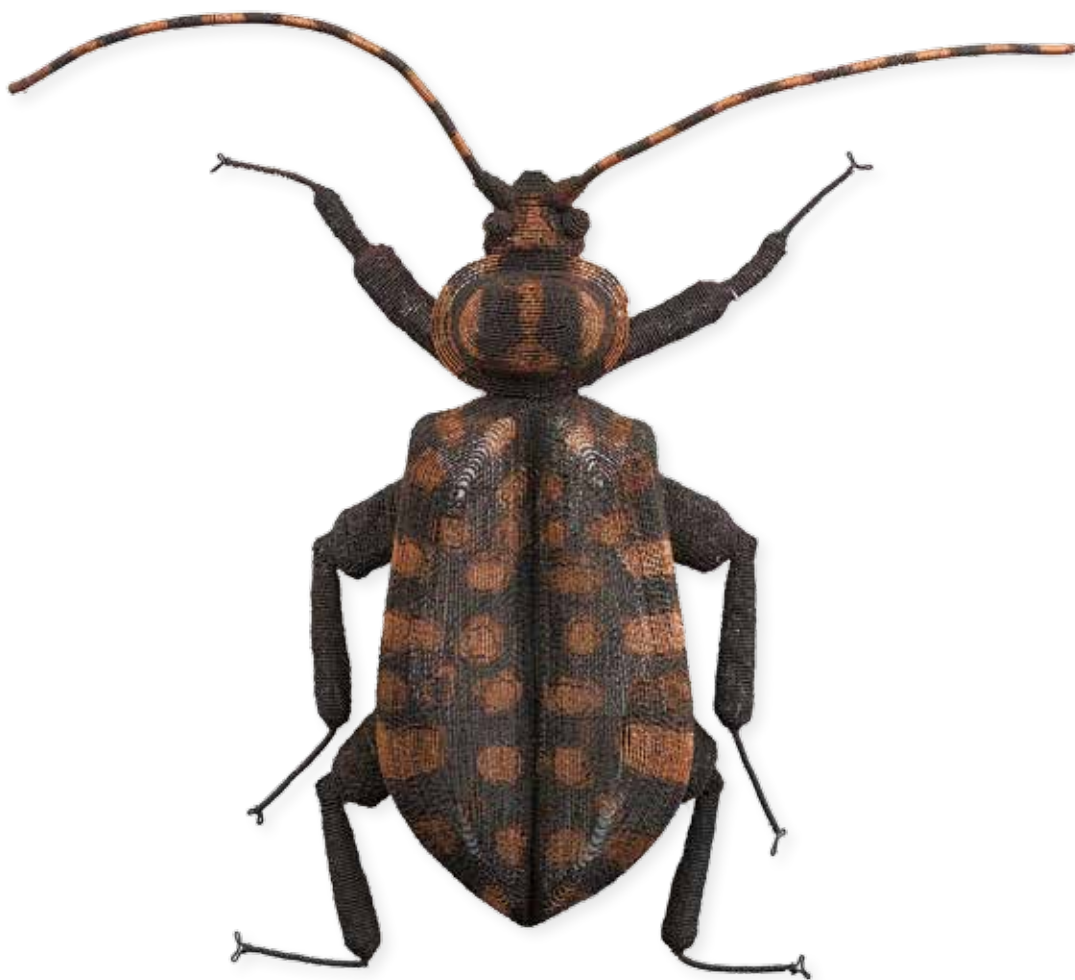
Soft Pool

signed, dated 65 and inscribed 'Paris'

oil on canvas

109,5 by 109,5 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



263

Walter OLTMANN

SOUTH AFRICAN 1960–

Spotted Beetle

steel wire

length: 86 cm

R100 000 – 120 000

264

William Joseph KENTRIDGE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

Zeno Writing, nine

each signed, numbered 16/40 in pencil and embossed with the Caversham Press chop mark; each inscribed with the artist's name, title and edition size on a Goodman Gallery label adhered to the reverse photogravure

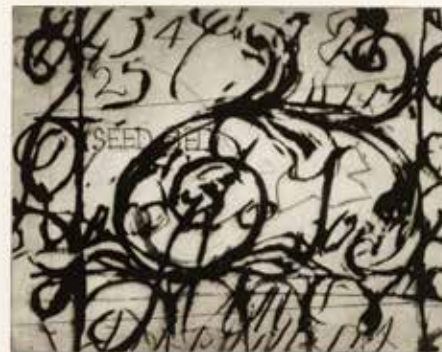
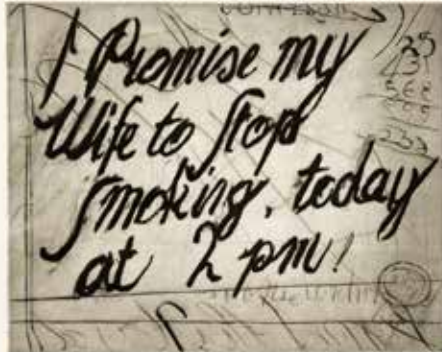
image size: 21 by 27,5 cm each (9)

R350 000 – 500 000

LITERATURE

Bronwyn Law-Viljoen. (2006) *William Kentridge Prints*, Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing. Another example of this edition illustrated on pages 124–129.





265

Jane ALEXANDER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1959–

something's going down, 1993–94

signed, dated and inscribed with the title on the underside
synthetic clay, oil paint, wood,
aluminium, leather and prints
height: 135 cm; depth: 131 cm

R 1 200 000 – 1 600 000

PROVENANCE

The Louis and Charlotte Schachat Collection.

EXHIBITED

Standard Bank Young Artist Award, July 1995 – April 1996, Exhibition Venues : Monument Gallery, Grahamstown; King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth; Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg; Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein; Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg; Durban Art Gallery, Durban; South African National Gallery, Cape Town

LITERATURE

Ivor Powell. (1995) *Jane Alexander, Sculpture and Photomontage*, Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Illustrated in colour on page 29.
Simon Njami and Akiko Miki. (2002) *Jane Alexander*, Ostfildern-Ruit:Hatje Cantz Verlag. Illustrated in colour on pages 51 and 115.

Perhaps the best description of Jane Alexander's landmark work appears in Ivor Powell's monograph on the internationally-recognised artist. *something's going down*, he began, 'has four figures, the tallest around 35 centimeters in height. The four – respectively a woman with her arm raised, a child activist disguised in a balaclava, a man, probably an albino, wearing a hat and dragging behind him an unspecified survival bundle, and another male figure dressed in a nauseous green discard coat – are moving in something like a procession along a ramp painted in military camouflage. Their attention is focused on something that is happening, so to speak, at stage right, and responding to it they lean slightly forward, like sunflowers towards a poisoned sun.

Behind all this, and conditioning it all, is the twice repeated image of an Ayrantype angel girl, her hands clasped as if in racially pure prayer; the galvanizing vision of the innocence and purity that is threatened by the dangerous Other. Images like this in history have usually masked the most corrupt and inhuman of ideologies, and indeed it is with this sinister double message that Jane Alexander uses the image in this context. On the back of the same billboard, the source of the agitation is explained. There, a message is appended, gleaned from a police roadblock. It reads as follows, and the same message is repeated in Xhosa:

WE ARE HERE TO:

*Search for stolen property

*Search for unlicensed firearms and ammunition

*Identify suspects and arrest them

This is necessary to maintain law and order and to protect (sic) you from troublemakers.

You have no reason to fear us.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Something's going down. Literally it is the disturbance down the road: figuratively it is something that takes place in the camouflage environment and it has to do with control, the fragility of the human in the face of the machinations of the inhumans.¹

¹ Ivor Powell. (1995) *Jane Alexander, Sculpture and Photomontage*, Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Page 28.



266

Johannes PHOKELA

SOUTH AFRICAN 1966–

Collar Series, seven

2006

3 signed and dated '06; 3 inscribed with the artist's name, title, medium and date on a Gallery MOMO label adhered to the reverse

oil on paper

each 58 by 40 cm (7)

R120 000 – 160 000

EXHIBITED

South African Pavilion, Venice Biennale, *Imaginary Fact: Contemporary South African Art and the Archive*, 2013

LITERATURE

Imaginary Fact: Contemporary South African Art and the Archive (2013).

Illustrated in colour on pages 129–132.

Johannes Phokela, who lived in London for seventeen years, used the unusual technique of oil sketching when he painted these seven portraits that make up *The Collar Series*. Such a sketch is done on a sheet of acetate, similar to that used by architects for their drawings, on which oil paint, thinned with turpentine, is quickly applied, usually with a piece of tissue paper. The result is a luminous glow emanating from the image that cannot be achieved by any more traditional means. As inspiration for these portraits, Phokela referenced the conventions of the seventeenth-century Dutch portraiture, such as those of Jan van Riebeeck and his wife Maria de la Quellerie, both with elaborate lace collars, in the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. In addition, he looked to photographs in newspapers of academics receiving honorary doctorates from South African universities, as well as famous spiritual leaders with religious insignia of various kinds and ritual garments with elaborate collars. What is so striking about these portraits, however, is the fact that the sitters are all cyphers: none of their faces are visible. Anybody could don such a pose, or wear such regalia as these seven sitters.







267

Helen (Mmakgabo Mapula) SEBIDI

SOUTH AFRICAN 1943–

Mo Mahaena Ke Mathata (At Home is Difficult)

signed and dated 93

oil on canvas

150 by 108 cm

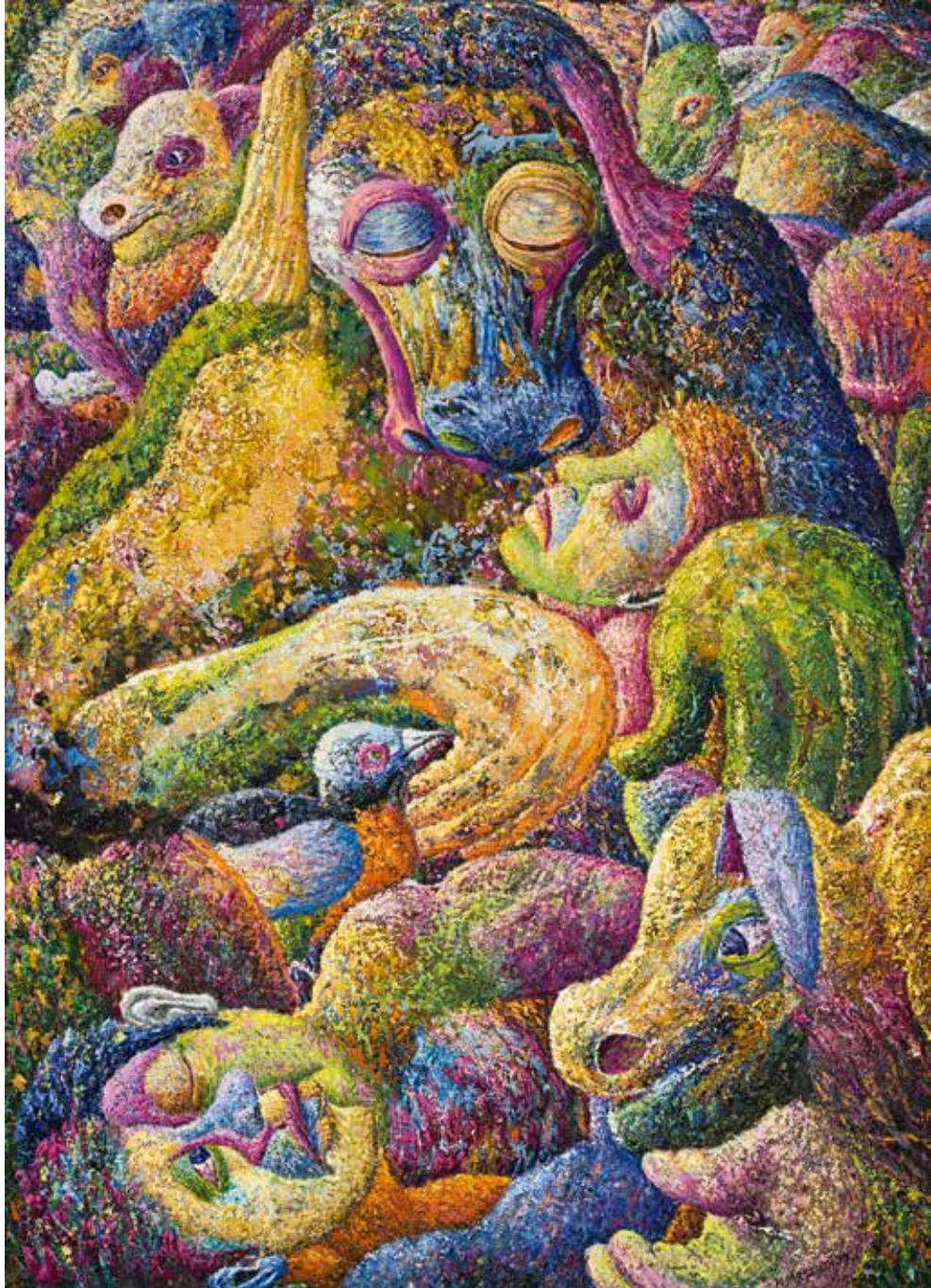
R100 000 – 150 000

LITERATURE

Juliette Leeb-du Toit. (ed). (2009) *Mmakgabo Mmapula Mmankgato Helen Sebidi*, Johannesburg: David Krut. Illustrated in colour on page 79.

Helen Sebidi is one of the most important South African painters of her generation, and has had a long and sustained career producing a large body of work. Her art making is informed by her traditional Venda background and she uses traditional imagery in a complex manner, making her palette very much her own. Her work is a colourful and vibrant fusion of the physical and the spiritual world, which she skillfully morphs in her images. In the present lot, Sebidi's religious and cultural affinities, as well as metaphysical forces and ancestral reverence, are made manifest, but perhaps the most strikingly beautiful aspect of the work is its intricately textured surface of power-exploded colour.

There is a resurgence in interest in Sebidi's work. She recently had an important solo exhibition at Everard Read, Johannesburg, and was invited to participate in the 32nd Biennale de Sao Paulo in May this year. She has also been awarded The Order of the Baobab in Gold by the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa for her excellent contribution in the field of visual and traditional arts and crafts.



268

Penny (Penelope) SIOPIS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1953–

Invention de l'Hystérie

signed
pastel on paper
125 by 83 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

EXHIBITED

The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg,
Pictures within Pictures, 1987

LITERATURE

Kathryn Smith (ed.) (2005) *Penny Siopis*,
Johannesburg: Goodman Gallery
Editions. Illustrated in colour on page 23.

As winner of the first Volkskas Atelier Award in 1986, Penny Siopis had the opportunity of living and working at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. There she continued her critical interest in western painting, developing specific connections between illusionism, femininity and psychoanalysis. The Cité is in the vicinity of Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, where Jean-Martin Charcot researched hysteria. A young Sigmund Freud was one of his students. Hysteria was popularly known as 'woman's disease', something that Siopis counters as 'woman's dis-ease' in works like *Invention de l'Hystérie*. She writes as follows:

'Hysteria was an affliction of particularly intelligent women who desired (for instance) more in life – education and so on ... Charcot, a late nineteenth-century neurologist, began using hypnosis in treating hysteria. His 'presentations' of hysterical patients became famous 'scientific' spectacles in which he displayed the afflicted patients before a select (male) audience. The patients' 'performances' - lifting their skirts, bearing their breasts etc – made these exhibitions the occasion for male voyeurism under the guise of 'objective science'.¹

Invention de l'Hystérie presents figures in a dream-like space, appearing at once natural and artificial through a mix of illusionistic rendering and expressive mark. The lower register shows a woman's torso, her hands wringing a cloth, and a jewellery box perched on a lace support. A similar jewellery box - a reference to Freud's analysis of the dream of his famous 'hysterical' patient Dora - is present in Siopis' later pastel, the canonical *Dora and the Other Woman* (1988).

The middle register of the work shows gestures of apparent distress as hands and bodies enter the visual field from left and right. Above is a black and white image depicting a photograph of Charcot demonstrating hypnosis on a 'hysterical' patient. Siopis used a copy of this photograph years later in her site-specific installation in the Freud Museum in London (2005). All the figurative elements are linked but also separated by a vertical serge of bright blue gestural marks that charge the image with energy.

Crowning the whole scene is a delicately wrought lace curtain marking the theatricality of the setting. The structure of the image evokes a visual disturbance that could correspond to a psychic state, or a faint, one of the apparent symptoms of hysteria. This unease is emphasized by the way the head of the main protagonist continues beyond the picture's edge. Her face is left to the viewer's imagination.

Invention de l'Hystérie represents a key example of Siopis' Paris pastels demonstrating the conceptual and formal complexity she is known for and her command of a challenging medium. Three decades have passed and its vibrant colour has not faded. Nor has Siopis' knack of drawing our attention to historical subjects that are still relevant today.

¹ Penny Siopis 'Dissenting Detail: Another Story of Art and Politics in South Africa' in Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz (eds.) (1999) *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art*, Johannesburg: Chalkham Hill Press. Page 248.



269

Joni BRENNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1969–

Idea

inscribed with the artist's name, date, title and medium on an Everard Read gallery label adhered to the reverse enamel painted plaster mounted on board

55,5 by 70 cm

R40 000 – 60 000

270

Joni BRENNER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1969–

Zoltan Karpathy

inscribed with the artist's name, date, medium and title on an Everard Read gallery label adhered to the reverse enamel painted plaster mounted on board

55,5 by 70 cm

R40 000 – 60 000

269



270



271

Pieter HUGO

SOUTH AFRICAN 1976–

Steven Mohapi, South Africa, 2003

signed, numbered 3/3 and inscribed
with the title in pencil in the margin
digital print

image size: 100 by 80 cm

R40 000 – 60 000

LITERATURE

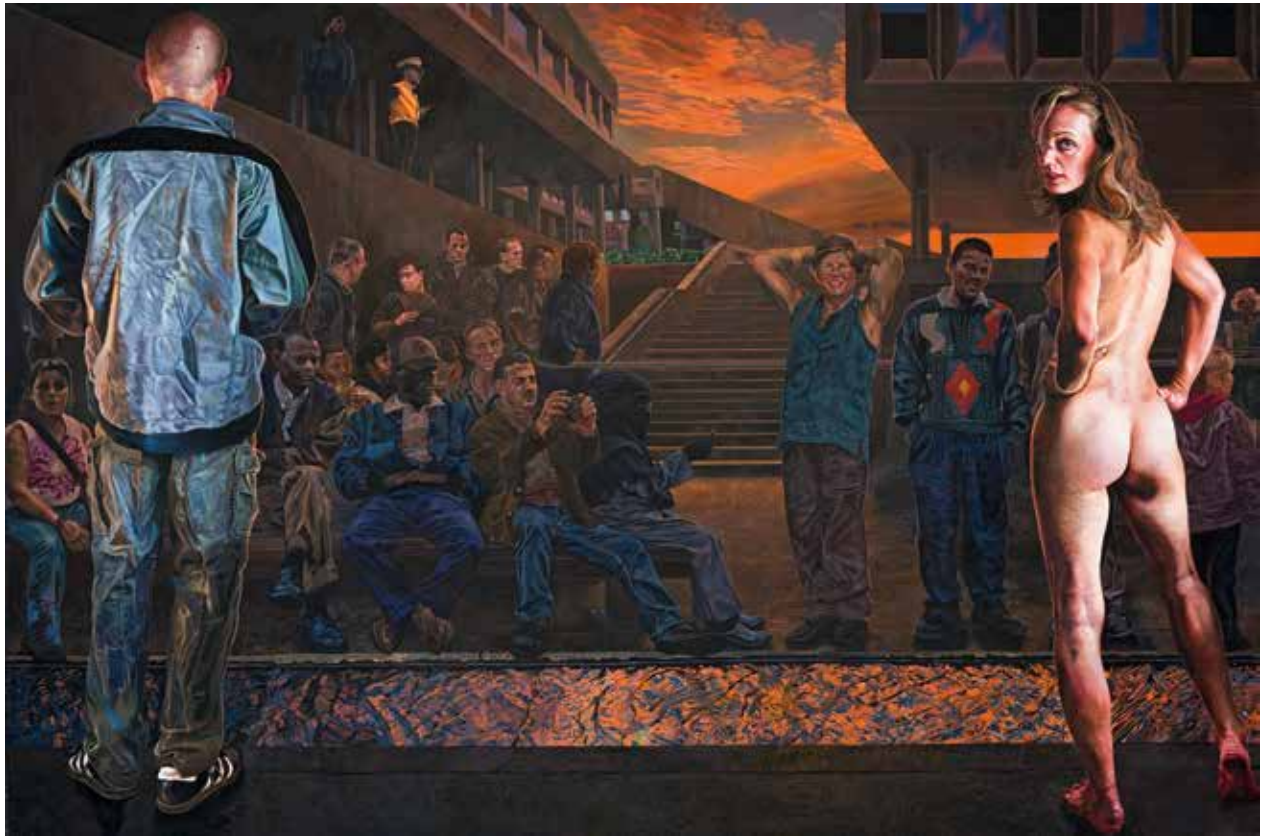
Pieter Hugo. (2006) *Looking Aside: South African studio portraits 2003–2006*, Rome: Punctum. Illustrated in colour on page 7.

Jillian Carman (ed.) (2010) *1910–2010: One hundred Years of Collecting: The Johannesburg Art Gallery*, Pretoria: Design-Magazine. Another example from the edition illustrated on in colour on page 174.

Barbara Freemantle (ed.) (2014) *From Sitting to Selfie: 300 years of South African portraits*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Another example from the edition illustrated on page 23 and the back cover.

Accompanied by a signed and dated copy of *Looking Aside: South African studio portraits 2003–2006*.





272

Deborah POYNTON

SOUTH AFRICAN 1970 –

Safety and Security, diptych

each signed, dated 2005 and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

each: 205,5 by 300 cm (2)

R400 000 – 600 000

LITERATURE

Sophie Perryer (ed.) (2006) *Deborah Poynton: Safety and Security*, Cape Town: Stevenson Gallery. Illustrated in colour on pages 24–28.

Deborah Poynton's diptych *Safety and Security* (2006), which was also the title of her 2006 solo exhibition at Stevenson in Cape Town, depicts some 60 individuals gathered in the public square of the Cape Town Civic Centre. The artist's characteristic rich and realistic depictions of the people who populate her works, are here shown in great detail, with each individual personality highly developed.

Poynton's expansive canvasses are inhabited by a group of individuals. She assiduously collects fragments of images from which she then selects the people, objects and settings to include in her imposing paintings, which bear veracious witness to the world around us.

The public square is historically a space where people meet, socialize, interact and communicate. Yet here she depicts the gathering of modern day humans as figures set against a stark twilight-lit concrete architectural space. All the characters are detached and isolated from



one another, in spite of their close proximity, keeping them 'safe and secure' from interaction with other human beings.

Even the striking, sensual, central nude female figure is viewed with muted interest and a lack of curiosity or sexual tension. She is remotely viewed through the lens of desensitizing electronic gadgets, or not at all. Her gaze is directed at the viewer, reminiscent of Edouard Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* (1863), but the disinterested and distracted audience denudes her of her sexuality. The hint of ageing and decaying flesh so prevalent in Poynton's work, here underscores the fleeting nature of beauty and our mortality – even of the stereotypically beautiful woman.

She is a provocative woman fully illuminated by the evening sky, and with her female curves accentuated with a glowing outline. Yet she is 'safe' from the unengaged and bored-looking spectators, many barricading themselves from their surroundings in various ways. Similarly

the fully-clothed man on the left of the canvas is entirely ignored, an outsider, and he himself is oblivious of the erotic naked woman next to him.

In *Safety and Security* the elderly couple in the foreground turn their back on the crowd, setting themselves apart from a world that no longer makes sense to them. They seem simultaneously bemused, resigned and removed from the scene. The lackluster crowd behind the couple focuses attention on something out of sight of the viewer. The characteristically bored and mostly ineffectual security guards are as disinterested in the scene attracting the attention of the crowd as they are of the woman, those around them, and the viewer too.

It is a powerful comment and indictment on the world we inhabit today, a world in which the isolated person is shielded and disconnected, showing little or no engagement with those around them.

273

Deborah Margaret BELL

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

Unearthed VI

stamped with the artist's name
and numbered 2/5
bronze with a brown patina
height: 199 cm

R600 000 – 800 000

274

Deborah Margaret BELL

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

Unearthed I

stamped with the artist's name
and numbered 2/5
bronze with a brown patina
height: 187 cm

R600 000 – 800 000

LITERATURE

Pippa Stein. (2004) *Deborah Bell*, Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing. Another example from this edition illustrated on pages 31 and 42.



273



274

275

Deborah Margaret BELL

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

Unearthed IV

stamped with the artist's name

and numbered 2/5

bronze with a brown patina

height: 215 cm

R700 000 – 900 000

276

Deborah Margaret BELL

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

Unearthed VII

bronze with a brown patina

height: 211 cm

R700 000 – 900 000



275



276

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Nesos, fifty-four

executed in 1968

each signed and numbered 4/25 in pencil in the margin; handwritten colophone reads: *Nesos* is the Greek word for island. The contents of this book are images from sixteen Greek islands that I knew. All the serigraphs have been made by me and no printer has touched the pages. There are a few odd proofs and only 25 numbered copies. Walter Battiss, Athens, 1968 colour screenprint

53: 28 by 40 cm;

1: 34 by 49 cm (54)

R400 000 – 600 000

EXHIBITED

Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, *Walter Battiss: I Invented Myself (The Jack M Ginsberg Collection)*, 6 July – 9 October 2016

LITERATURE

Warren Siebrits (ed.) (2016) *Walter Battiss: I Invented Myself (The Jack M Ginsberg Collection)*, Johannesburg: The Ampersand Fund. Illustrated in colour on pages 87–93.



Nesos, the book produced by Walter Battiss over eight months after 'five consecutive trips to the Greek islands between 1966 and 1968' formed a significant part of the major exhibition this year, *Walter Battiss: 'I Invented Myself' (The Jack M Ginsberg Collection)*.¹ This exact edition, the fourth of a possible twenty-five handmade copies (although it is likely that even ten were produced), was the same example used in the show.

In the magnificent book accompanying the exhibition, Warren Siebrits, who curated the exhibition and conceptualised the book, wrote that this series of fifty-four screenprints, which was dis-bound for the exhibition, 'surpassed anything previously achieved by any other artist in technical virtuosity'.² He added that in his opinion 'there are no other silkscreens from the hundreds made by Battiss over the years that come close to the technical and visual sophistication of the exquisite images in *Nesos*, which are testament to the sheer pleasure the artist felt when visiting Greece'.³

In an essay for *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist*, published for the retrospective exhibition of his works at the Standard Bank Gallery in 2005, Frieda Harmsen confirmed the intense pleasure Battiss found in Greece. 'Greece and the islands cast him under a spell from which he could never again escape,' she wrote, 'this Mediterranean world was his Eden'.⁴

Murray Schoonraad provided additional insight to Battiss's achievements in Greece:

'He had been using silkscreen as art medium for some 15 years prior to this date (1967... when he *discovered* Greece), but now he began to master the technique of a great artist. Because of his love for colour and kinetic forms, he was particularly attracted to this graphic medium. Although of late he sometimes employs young artists to print his graphic works, at this time when his production of seismographs was so prolific he printed each one personally. He rebelled against the machine age and, probably as a tribute to the unsophisticated life he encountered on the Greek islands, he decided to produce a handmade book... Even the text was handcut and hand painted by Battiss. Many of the pages are technically experimental in order to obtain particular effects. The pages are evidence of a tremendous *joie de vivre*. They are gay and colourful, full of spontaneous use of colour and form. This is truly an ode to beauty – a poem in colour'.⁵

¹ Warren Siebrits. (2016) *Walter Battiss: 'I Invented Myself'* Johannesburg: The Ampersand Foundation. Page 78.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Frieda Harmsen. (2005) 'Walter Battiss – Universal Traveller' in *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist* Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Page 46.

⁵ Murray Schoonraad. (1976) *Walter Battiss*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers. Page 20.





278

Karel Anthony NEL

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

Edge Piece

bronze and steel
width: 52 cm

R60 000 – 80 000

Karel Nel has made a number of large and important site-specific sculptures such as *Trembling Field* (2010) at Circa, *Reflective Field* (2011) on *Water, the [Delicate] Thread of Life* exhibition and *Forest Veil* (2014) on the exhibition *Exact Imagination*, both at Standard Bank Gallery. This rare, early small bronze and steel sculpture, entitled *Edge Piece*, was awarded the national Afrox Metalart Award in 1977 in the student category. At the time Nel was majoring in sculpture in the Wits Fine Arts Department under Neels Coetzee and Malcolm Payne.

The constructed aesthetic of *Edge Piece* and its conceptual engagement with the relationship of sculpture to base, and the base's relationship to the surface it was placed on, was significant. These concerns in the genesis of the sculpture related it to the work of internationally renowned steel sculptor, Anthony Caro. This led in the following year, 1978, to Nel going to study under Caro at one of the most famous sculpture schools at the time, St Martin's School of Art, London. That same year Nel was awarded the overall Afrox Metalart award in the open category back in South Africa.

The second award-winning work was illustrated in Berman's enlarged edition of *Art & Artists in South Africa* which included sculpture for the first time. This work had evolved directly from *Edge Piece*.



279

Georgina GRATRIX

SOUTH AFRICAN 1982–

Muse (Marilyn)

oil on canvas

70 by 90 cm

R60 000 – 80 000



280

Andrew Clement VERSTER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1937–

Table

signed and dated 83

oil on canvas

160 by 240 cm

R120 000 – 160 000





281

Robert Griffiths HODGINS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

A Distant Connection

signed, dated 1994 and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

121,5 by 91 cm

R450 000 – 550 000

In its form and content, this powerful Hodgins painting seems to relate to *The Scene of the Crime*, a work he made in the same year, 1994, which forms part of the Constitutional Court Art Collection. The year marked South Africa's first democratic election, a time of great hope for the future, but also a time of reflection on the violations of the past. Both paintings depict scenes suggestive of the latter. But whatever they imply, the depiction feels more filmic than a real-life situation. This is as much to do with this expressive form of painting as iconography.

Both scenes show a dark interior. We are unsure if they are actually connected in time and place or the sequence of the scenes. Does the landing or hallway of *A Distant Connection* lead to the corridor of *The Scene of the Crime* or the other way around? Does the hanging lamp in both works suggest the interrogation bulb motif present in many Hodgins paintings, or does it comment on a specific moment of suffering?

In *A Distant Connection*, the dimly lit interior is punctuated by four yellow shapes indicating light sources. Red forms collect in the centre of the composition depicting clothes hanging on the wall. The intense colour is echoed in the torn seat of the overturned chair occupying the foreground. The small figure leaning over the banister connects visually and seemingly narratively with the large figure at the bottom of the staircase, both marked by painted lines, orange and maroon respectively, that attach to their bodies. The proximity of the large figure to the overturned chair suggests an ominous scene, perhaps a memory. But, for all the forensic form of diagrammatic line and composition, the precise narrative is not forthcoming. In true Hodgins style he favours painterly expressiveness that keeps us guessing.



The Scene of the Crime



282

Diane Veronique VICTOR

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

Rhino

signed and dated 2016
smoke drawing on paper
149 x 120 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



283

William Joseph KENTRIDGE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

Resist The Hour

signed and numbered 5/50 in red

conté in the margin

digital print on cotton rag paper

186 by 112 cm

R80 000 – 120 000





284

Norman Clive CATHERINE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–

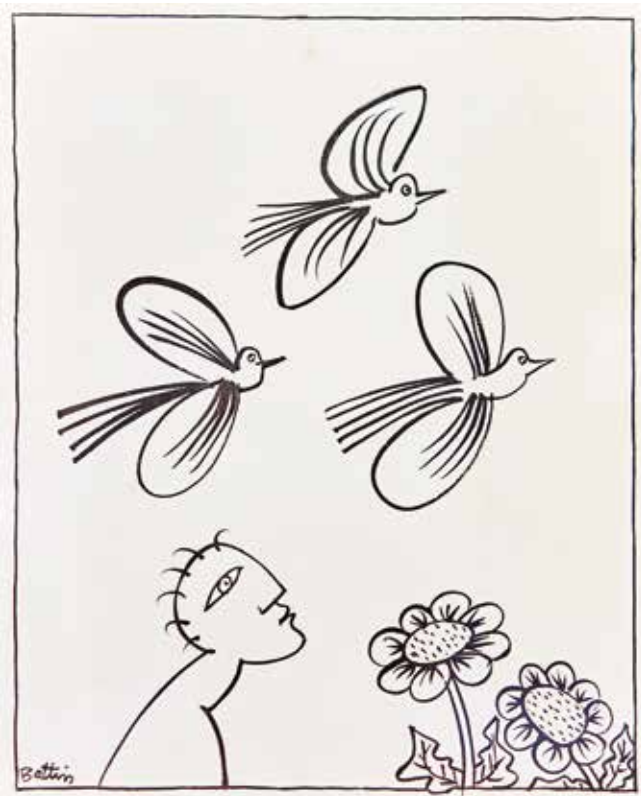
Speaker

signed and dated 88

mixed media

height: 174 cm, including base

R200 000 – 250 000



285

Walter Whall BATTISS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Fook Book II

signed, dated 14.11.79, numbered 5/40 and dedicated; signed on the original drawing
colour lithographs in leather-bound artist's book

R100 000 – 150 000

EXHIBITED

Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg,
Walter Battiss: I Invented Myself
(*The Jack M Ginsberg Collection*),
6 July – 9 October 2016

LITERATURE

Warren Siebrits (ed.) (2016) *Walter Battiss: I Invented Myself* (*The Jack M Ginsberg Collection*), Johannesburg: The Ampersand Fund. Another example of the edition illustrated in colour on page 321.

Original drawing included.



286

Vladimir Griegorovich TRETCHIKOFF

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

Confrontation

signed

oil on canvas

61 by 122 cm

R300 000 – 500 000

According to Boris Gorelik, who has published widely on Tretchikoff, an image of this work was used extensively to publicise exhibitions of the artist's work in the early 1970s.

Accompanied by a signed copy of *Pigeon's Luck* by Vladimir Tretchikoff and Anthony Hocking, 1973



287

Norman Clive CATHERINE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–

Bedtime Story

signed

oil on canvas

120 by 201 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

288

Norman Clive CATHERINE

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–

Bedlam

signed and dated 2011

oil on canvas

120 by 149,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

At the heart of the work of Norman Catherine is the notion of communication: people communicating with one another, or conversing with themselves or their alter egos, often in and through the monstrous images of their nightmares. Man and beast are clearly engaged in some conversation. 'The topic', Wilhelm van Rensburg has written, 'is equally compelling: they seem to talk about their fears and aspirations, and about the world in which they live. They fear looming danger and imminent assault. Their world is one of zombies, mummies, amputees, multi-headed mutants, monsters with multiple mouths and eyes, suffering deathbed patients, robotic humans and thorny cactus-like creatures. In this regard, many critics inadvertently relegate these veritable 'living dead' types to Catherine's resistance art under apartheid, which the argument goes, gave rise to such creatures!'

¹ Wilhelm Van Rensburg. (2014) *Norman Catherine: Print Editions 1968–2014*, Johannesburg: Gallery Art on Paper. Page 1.



289

Dylan LEWIS

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

Leopard

signed and numbered 4/15

bronze with a brown patina

height: 68 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

Dylan Lewis Studio number S310.



290

John MEYER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

Ripplemead Vlei
(East-Griqualand near
Mount Currie)

signed; inscribed with the title in
another hand on the reverse

oil on linen

78,5 by 68,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000





291

Adriaan Hendrik BOSHOFF

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–2007

Cattle Pulling Wagon

signed

oil on board

40,5 by 80,5 cm

R140 000 – 160 000



292

Keith Savel ALEXANDER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

Desert Rocks

signed and dated 83

oil on canvas

91,5 by 122 cm

R300 000 – 400 000



293

Keith Savel ALEXANDER

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

The Ancient Ascent

signed and dated 90

oil on canvas

89,5 by 120,5 cm

R300 000 – 400 000

LITERATURE

David Robbins. (2000) *Keith Alexander: The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers. Illustrated in colour on page 107.

END OF SALE